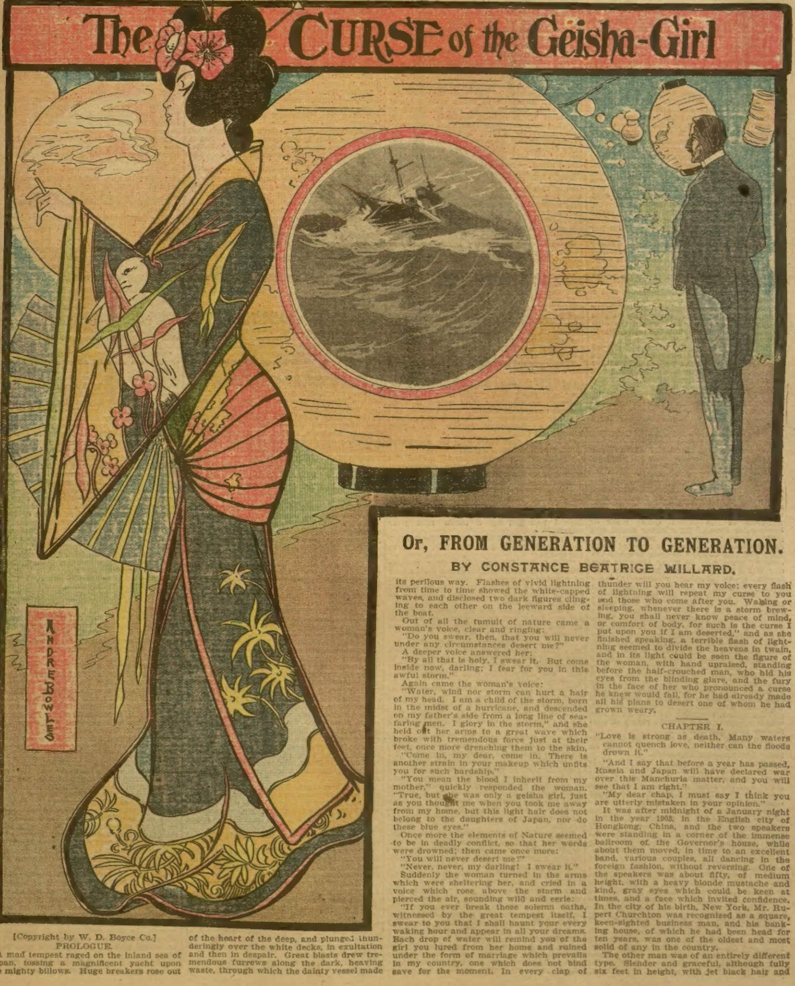
LOOK FOR THE BEGINNING OF "RUBY GORDON'S LOVE" NEXT WEEK.

THE CHICAGO LEDGER

VOL. XXXII, NO. 25. CHICAGO, ILL., SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1904. SINGLE COPIES 5 CENTS.

The CURSE of the Geisha-Girl



Or, FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.

BY CONSTANCE BEATRICE WILLARD.

[Copyright by W. D. Boyce Co.]

PROLOGUE.

A mad tempest raged on the inland sea of Japan, tossing a magnificent yacht upon the mighty billows. Huge breakers rose out of the heart of the deep, and plunged thunderingly over the white decks, in exultation and then in despair. Great blasts drew tremendous furrows along the dark, heaving waste, through which the dainty vessel made its perilous way. Flashes of vivid lightning from time to time showed the white-capped waves, and disclosed two dark figures clinging to each other on the leeward side of the boat.

Out of all the tumult of nature came a woman's voice, clear and ringing:

"Do you swear, then, that you will never under any circumstances desert me?"

A deeper voice answered her:

"By all that is holy, I swear it. But come inside now, darling; I fear for you in this awful storm."

Again came the woman's voice:

"Water, wind nor storm can hurt a hair of my head. I am a child of the storm, born in the midst of a hurricane, and descended on my father's side from a long line of seafaring men. I glory in the storm," and she held out her arms to a great wave which broke with tremendous force just at their feet, once more drenching them to the skin.

"Come in, my dear, come in. There is another strain in your makeup which unfits you for such hardship."

"You mean the blood I inherit from my mother," quickly responded the woman. "True, but she was only a geisha girl, just as you thought me when you took me away from my home, but this light hair does not belong to the daughters of Japan, nor do these blue eyes."

Once more the elements of Nature seemed to be in deadly conflict, so that her words were drowned; then came once more:

"You will never desert me?"

"Never, never, my darling! I swear it."

Suddenly the woman turned in the arms which were sheltering her, and cried in a voice which rose above the storm and pierced the air, sounding wild and eerie:

"If you ever break those solemn oaths, witnessed by the great tempest itself, I swear to you that I shall haunt your every waking hour and appear in all your dreams. Each drop of water will remind you of the girl you lured from her home and ruined under the form of marriage which prevails in my country, one which does not bind save for the moment. In every clap of thunder will you hear my voice; every flash of lightning will repeat my curse to you and those who come after you. Waking or sleeping, whenever there is a storm brewing, you shall never know peace of mind, or comfort of body, for such is the curse I put upon you if I am deserted," and as she finished speaking, a terrible flash of lightning seemed to divide the heavens in twain, and in its light could be seen the figure of the woman, with hand upraised, standing before the half-crouched man, who hid his eyes from the blinding glare, and the fury in the face of her who pronounced a curse he knew would fall, for he had already made all his plans to desert one of whom he had grown weary.

CHAPTER I.

> "Love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

"And I say that before a year has passed, Russia and Japan will have declared war over this Manchuria matter, and you will see that I am right."

"My dear chap, I must say I think you are utterly mistaken in your opinion."

It was after midnight of a January night in the year 1903, in the English city of Hongkong, China, and the two speakers were standing in a corner of the immense ballroom of the Governor's house, while about them moved, in time to an excellent band, various couples, all dancing in the foreign fashion, without reversing. One of the speakers was about fifty, of medium height, with a heavy blonde mustache and kind, gray eyes which could be keen at times, and a face which invited confidence. In the city of his birth, New York, Mr. Rupert Churchton was recognized as a square, keen-sighted business man, and his banking house, of which he had been head for ten years, was one of the oldest and most solid of any in the country.

The other man was of an entirely different type. Slender and graceful, although fully six feet in height, with jet black hair and eyes and a clean-shaven face which could express and conceal emotions at will, very few men were more handsome than he, with that style of good looks which appeal to a woman. There was something in appearance, voice and manner which denoted a thorough acquaintance with women, and indeed, for a number of years, Quinton Vambrace, a member of one of the oldest families of England, which boasted several noblemen in its various connections, had been eagerly welcomed in the best circles, and as some maternal ancestors had left him a blessing and an immense fortune, he was considered a very desirable candidate in the market, and managing mothers tried hard to get him seriously interested. His years numbered thirty-five, but he was generally considered a decade younger.

"Why?" continued Mr. Churchton, as Vambrace objected to his view of the political situation.

Before the latter could speak, however, a voice was heard at the former's elbow.

"Uncle, dear, you are very ungallant. Do you always forget when a lady honors you by giving you a dance?" and both men, turning, gazed upon one of the sweetest faces America ever produced, that belonging to Lillian Greencastle, who had already been recognized as the most beautiful lady in Hongkong.

Hers was a face which recalled the days of Greece, when art was in its prime, so perfectly classical was it in outline, and yet it possessed a subtle something, a rare purity of its own, which distinguished it from any other. The delicately cut features were crowned with a great mass of pale golden hair, with a singular sheen like gold leaf itself, which she wore in a loose knot at the nape of her neck, from which delicate tendrils escaped to flutter lovingly about the tiny, shell-like ears and slender white neck. From this charming face looked out eyes as dark as night, shaded by eyelashes almost black in color. A soft, fluttering pink bloomed in the cheeks, like nothing more than the wild rose of her native land, while its beauty was repeated in the exquisitely moulded lips. The figure of this young girl, barely seventeen, was slender as yet, but beautifully proportioned, although she was above average height, and tonight it was well set off by a Parisian gown of soft, delicate green manilla gauze, over shimmering silk of the same hue, while upon her white neck and in the meshes of her bright hair gleamed priceless emeralds, for which her affectionate uncle had paid almost a fortune.

Both gentlemen smiled upon her—no angry glances had as yet ever met her eyes—and then Vambrace said in his cool, quiet way:

"Punish him, Miss Greencastle, by transferring your favors to me. I assure you I will not forget."

The elder man smiled indulgently, and a little lazily, as he said:

"Please forgive me, darling, but it is very warm, and I cannot steer properly in this foreign way, or rather in between the others. Let Vambrace profit by my defalcation, and forgive me."

With a merry laugh the young girl slipped her hand into the arm offered her and said over her shoulder as she walked gaily away:

"I gladly accept your substitute, but I will never forgive your forgetting," then turning to her partner she continued:

"I feel like some fairy princess tonight."

"If I did not know that you dislike compliments, I might say——"

The girl looked at him quizzically for a moment, and then interrupted:

"But you see I do dislike them. Just talk sense, and let's begin to dance."

"We will begin to dance, but please do not require me to talk sense," was his laughing rejoinder, and, indeed, it would have been difficult amid such surroundings.

The room was beautifully decorated, not only with the Union Jack and quantities of bunting, but flowers of every description in such profusion that the air was heavy with the intoxicating perfume yielded by the blossoms of the Orient. Great roses of every color drooped their lovely heads, and grew sweeter with each passing hour; chrysanthemums so large and varied as to have lost resemblance to their original ancestors; orchids of so many varieties that any but a botanist would have been confused: great glowing geraniums; huge bunches of pansies, with their delicate little faces looking out upon the brilliant scene; camellias, both red and white, and many others exquisite in color and perfume. In the midst of this glowing scene moved ladies of various climes, save the one in which the ball was held, for Chinese ladies are never present at such functions; all radiantly clad, with gleaming white shoulders and costly jewels, while many of the men were equally brilliant with the breasts covered with jeweled medals, and numbers of them in rich uniforms. No wonder that the fair young American girl, fresh from boarding school, should feel bewildered and ask herself if it were she who was in the midst of such strange scenes, receiving the homage of men whose approval set a certain stamp of perfection upon her brow.

"You enjoy all this?" asked her companion, lowering his voice slightly, a way he had when speaking to women.

"Enjoy it? How could I help it? It is simply wonderful, Mr. Vambrace. What could you imagine more lovely and inspiring?" and the sweet face was raised to his.

As the man of the world, who had looked upon the faces of the fairest women of every clime, and seen them melt into admiration of him, gazed down at the almost child in his arms, he felt a certain wonderful thrill pass over him, and he knew that for the first time in his varied life, strewn as it was with broken hearts and ruined lives, he was actually and truly in love, and then and there he registered a vow to win this lovely young Columbia for his own. However, he had lived too long, and learned too well the art of concealing his thoughts, to let anything of what was passing in his mind show in either face or manner, so he laughingly replied, as he skilfully swung her about the room:

"Wait, my dear Miss Greencastle, until you are presented at court, and see my King and Queen in all their imperial glory, and then you little republican will confess that the older nations know how to do things up in the right manner. Until then, think this is the best that England can produce," and he enjoyed her spirited rejoinder:

"Your land may produce more brilliant spectacles, but it does not give the poor a chance as does ours, and I shall always be an American, and proud of my birth."

In the meanwhile, the young man who had escorted Lillian to her uncle, stood by the latter with an annoyed expression upon his boyish face.

"Just like those girls," he grumbled. "Never consider that I may have feelings."

"See here, Alex," began the older man, laughingly, but the other broke in with:

"It's no use, uncle, I just get mad at them. It's enough to make a fellow do something desperate, the way they both go on. I did think Lilly was a little better than Rosebud, but here she goes off with that Englishman, and forgets all about me."

Mr. Churchton threw back his head and laughed. Then, seeing that his young companion was seriously annoyed, he said soothingly:

"See here, boy, this is the first real ball the girls have ever attended, and you must not be too hard on them. Vambrace is all right. I have had him looked up, cabled in mid-ocean to both New York and London, when he seemed to be glued to our party on the Nipon Maru, and he's just what he claims to be. It's been a good thing to have him with us, or there are a good many things such as this"—waving his hand in a general way—"that we might have whistled for in vain, but for him."

"Damm him and his favors," stormed the young fellow, who was about eighteen, a bright young fellow, center rush on his football team, and a fairly good all-round athlete during his first year at Phillips Academy, from which he had been taken by his indulgent guardian to make a trip about the world. Ordinarily he was an excellent specimen of American boyhood, with his soft brown hair, clear blue eyes, and well-knit, muscular figure, but just now the pleasant, boyish face was stormy and the eyes clouded. Evidently Alex Dupleix was not in the best of tempers. Suddenly the cloud lifted as a tiny hand crept inside his own, and a clear young voice cried:

"Come on, my blessed Anxiety, dance the rest of this with me, and you shall the rest, too, if you will only look pretty. Vin is just as tired of me as he can be, and wants to look up Lil, so, smile like a good little boy, and off we go," and without pausing he complied, dashing with his pink-robed partner into the great swirling crowd, and Mr. Churchton turned toward another gloomy-faced young fellow, who propped himself against the wall and scanned the moving figures.

"You're in the dumps, too, Vin?" he asked, and only smiled when the one addressed said sharply:

"I think we ought to look up Mrs. Humphries. I haven't seen her for an hour," and he moved away from his safe corner with some regret, although he admitted that it was uncivil, if not improper, to neglect the chaperone of his nieces, especially as she was still a very beautiful and young appearing woman herself.

Wilder surged the music, and faster moved the couples, until one, not accustomed to the foreign style of dancing, felt her little head turning round and round.

"Alex," she gasped, "take me out on this balcony, or whatever it is called, and let me get some breath back," and then as she and her partner passed through the French window to the wide veranda, she sighed contentedly:

"Ain't this just too lovely for anything? Oh, I feel just like a Juliet!"

"Take me for your Romeo?" asked the football champion, with more earnestness than jest in his voice, for the surroundings were influencing him, also.

The young girl paused in a vigorous fanning of her lovely little face to bestow a look of deepest disgust upon him.

"A nice Romeo you'd make, donkey! How'd you get up a trellis with your weight?"

"That's mean. When I am on the table I only weigh 140, and I can train down to thirty-five."

"Well," was the roguish answer, accomplished with the delightful gleam from a pair of dancing dark eyes, "I don't know about your being on the table, but since we started on this voyage you have eaten enough to go under it each meal."

"Rose, you know sea air makes a fellow eat like fury, and uncle wants me to build up and not train any now, except just enough to keep me in trim."

"No, I don't know anything about it, except that a fellow who can eat half a dozen rice birds for his breakfast, in addition to everything else, won't do for a Romeo for me," and again came that laughing glance from the brilliant eyes.

The boy assumed an elder-brother air, as he looked down on the tiny little creature before him, and remarked carelessly:

"I heard some one say the other day that no one would ever think you and Lilly were twins."

"That's nothing new, Mr. Pertness. Considering that Lilly is a head taller than I; that she is a blond, except her eyes, and I a brunette; that she is beautiful and I just passably pretty; that she looks twenty, and I about fourteen, there is no wonder that I am taken for a little girl and she a young lady, but we are twins just the same. It just happens that she looks like mamma and I am papa's image, if one can judge from pictures," and she paused out of breath.

The warm wind blew over the two, wafting from the heated room inside rare and exotic perfumes, and the sound of the ravishing music. The girl leaned back comfortably in the cane seat and looked up at the young fellow before her, but evidently thinking of something else. She wronged herself when she said she was only passably pretty, for in her own way, Rosebud Greencastle was quite as beautiful as her twin sister, but hers was the beauty of the warm, glowing blush rose, while Lilly resembled her namesake flower. The clear, creamy complexion of Rose glowed with a richer color; the dark eyes were dancing with fun and mischief, and the cloud of dark hair was as fine and fluffy as that of a new-born babe. From the crown of her fashionably-dressed hair, to the tip of her tiny pink slipper peeping beneath her pink-embroidered chiffon skirts, she was as dainty and charming as a rose itself, although the thorne were there also.

As the boy gazed, a warmer light came into his honest blue eyes, and he said, hesitatingly:

"I say, Rosie, dear, don't play horse with me all the time. Oh, and I say, don't let that Englishman hear you call me Anxiety, will you?"

The little Cupid's bow mouth pursed as its owner asked with mock seriousness:

"But, my dear child, what am I to call you? That is your legal and Christian name, given unto you in baptism by your——"

"Cut it Rosie. If my old granddad did tack on such a name, I ain't to blame. If my parents had lived, I guess they'd have called me something decent."

"Anxiety is decent enough; in fact, it is a very respectable, soul-tearing sort of a thing, as most of the good, respectable things are," teased the girl.

"The old gentleman said that I was an awful anxiety to my poor mother and killed her, and that the last thought father had was for me, and so he pasted me with it."

"And with a goodly amount of this world's goods," suggested the tormentor.

"Oh, yes, I guess I'm heeled all right, but my lot isn't quite what a fellow would ask. My father killed in a railroad wreck before I was born, and my mother dying when I was born. If it hadn't been for you two girls and Uncle Rupert, I guess I'd caved in long ago."

The mischievous eyes softened. "Dear uncle is so good to us all," she whispered.

"Pretty hard lines for him. You two girls dumped on him; then me, no relation, because grandfather made him my guardian; and then Vin. Why did he draw him, too, Rosie?"

"I don't know exactly. I think, though, that some one uncle knew wronged Vin's father. He told us girls we must be good to Vin because through a friend of his the boy had been made to suffer."

"So here we are. Item—uncle, you girls, Vin and me, with our handsome widow to play propriety, though she's pretty young for that. Is she one of uncle's finds, too?"

Rosie looked puzzled. "I don't know about that, either, exactly. One day he came home and spoke about us growing up and needing a lady to watch over us, just after he had brought us from boarding school, and that he had one all ready for us, and the next day she came."

"Yes, I found her there when I came home. Phew! but she's a screamer for looks, ain't she?"

"Y-e-s," came rather slowly from the fresh young lips, "but, Alex—don't whisper it—I don't like her."

"You don't?"

"No. Lilly does, but she loves every one. Somehow, I don't believe she means all she says and does, and, Alex, she powders!"

The boy looked at the perfect complexion of his little companion and shuddered, too.

"This is on the quiet, you know. My! but she would just finish me off if she heard my slang. Oh, Alex, what was that?"

"What?" asked the boy, turning quickly.

"Hush! there, see! Alex, save me, can't you see? Oh, it's dreadful, save me!" and with a piercing scream the girl fell senseless into the young arms of the boy, who gazed wildly about, but could see nothing but the crowd of anxious faces at the French windows, called by the cry which had rung out so discordantly upon the perfume-drenched air, and clashed with the voluptuous music.

CHAPTER II.

"Love, fed upon despair, is a dangerous weapon."

For the moment confusion reigned, then a low, soft voice was heard asking:

"Is Rose injured?" and a lady glided through one of the windows to the side of the young man and his unconscious burden.

Alex looked up and sighed in a relieved way.

"I'm sure I don't know a little bit," he said. "She seemed to see something, Mrs. Humphries, and then screamed and fainted. Good Robinson! no wonder," he finished, and in horrified amazement the spectators stood speechless.

In the bright light shed from the many windows stood the figure of a geisha girl, her face cunningly painted white and heavily rouged, as is the custom, dressed in a robe of sable blackness. This garment, however, seemd alive with countless crimson serpents, all spitting venom, although they were only cunningly embroidered. Before any one could speak the apparition raised a right hand pointed straight at Quinton Vambrace who had joined the little group on the porch, while from her painted lips issued these words:

"My curse rests upon you and all who come after you. The curse of the geisha girl whom you have deserted, the wife of the tempest. Beware, false betrayer of women, of my curse!" and before she could be seized the strange creature vanished in the dense foliage, and the most vigorous searching failed to discover her whereabouts.

In the meantime, Rose was tenderly carried into the house and soon revived, but at the same time a heavy hand was laid on Vambrace's shoulder, and Mr. Churchton, his gray eyes stern and searching, asked quietly:

"Mr. Vambrace, was that tirade directed toward you?"

The younger man turned, and his face wore an expression of utter astonishment as he replied earnestly, looking the other straight in the eyes:

"I believe it was, although I assure you I never saw her before in my life."

"Can you prove this statement?" came in cold tones from behind, and both men, turning, faced Vincent Lyndstock, whom his intimates called Vin.

"Not further than my word—the word of honor of a gentleman," was the courteous answer, although there was deep anger underlying each word.

"Come, come, boys," Mr. Churchton broke in quickly. "We must get the ladies to the hotel, and then, Vambrace, we will listen to anything you have to say. I always believe a man's word of honor, if I consider him a gentleman, and I certainly know you are one. Now, Vin, I insist upon your letting the matter rest for a short time. When and where can we see you?" turning with a kindly expression upon his face to the Englishman, who had drawn himself to his full height with an expression of hauteur upon his singularly handsome face.

"I will be in my rooms at your disposal until you see fit to call upon me, or I will come to you if you so desire," the young man replied, still with extreme courtesy, although it was evident he held his temper with a grip of iron.

"All right, we will be there in half an hour. Come, Vin, we will look up the girls and Mrs. Humphries, and get off," and Vincent was forced to be content, although his eyes glowed and his heart burned with anger against the man he believed so utterly unworthy to associate with those he loved dearer than life itself. Mrs. Humphries had her charges waiting, and after a few minutes' delay the party was accommodated with sedan chairs and started for the King Edward Hotel where all, including Quinton Vambrace, had taken rooms.

Lillian objected to parting from her sister even for the few minutes required to reach the theaters, but as these chairs hold but one person, she was forced to submit, although she atoned generously when they were together again. Rose made no objection, but seemed in a haze as she was carefully placed in the chair, and had not recovered herself, even when her sister's arms were about her and tender kisses showered upon her face, from which all the pretty color had fled. Mrs. Humphries hovered near, anxious to assist and to hear the girl's version of what had frightened her, but Rose only shuddered and begged to be left alone. Evidently her nerves had received a severe shock.

In the meantime, Mr. Churchton, with two grave-faced young men, entered the apartments occupied by the wealthy Englishman, who came to meet them with a grave courtesy. Mr. Churchton took the chair offered him, but the two younger men refused, standing rigidly on each side of him, their boyish faces set and grim.

Vambrace was the first to begin the subject.

"You gentlemen are here to have me clear myself, I believe, of an imputation against my honor?" he asked.

"That is it exactly," Mr. Churchton replied, almost genially, for no doubts lingered in his mind. Frank, honorable in the highest degree, he took other men at his own estimate.

The other two said nothing, but not a feature relaxed, although both longed to get at the man and show him that Americans believe in cleanly living and honorable actions.

The Englishman looked the three straight in the eyes. His head reared itself proudly, and his shoulders squared as he said distinctly and positively:

"Gentlemen, I am in an unpleasant situation. I am accused of something of which I was never guilty, I give you my word of honor. The woman who called herself 'my wife of the tempest' I never saw before tonight. It is evident that she is a victim of the practice which prevails in Japan. It is possible there to marry one of the geisha girls, as they are called, and desert her the next day. It is a custom which has always awakened a feeling of disgust in my heart, as it semes to me it ought in that of any decent man. More than that, I have never been in Japan. Although I have traveled all through the Orient, I have never visited Japan, having certain private reasons against doing so. If you gentlemen so desire, I can bring to you several dozen—half a hundred if necessary—who rank abong the very best men here, officers of both the army and navy, members of the diplomatic corps, officials of the colonial government, who can tell you that I am just who I have represented myself—Quinton Vambrace, second son of my father, now deceased, and nephew of Lord Tasmayne, Earl of Stonniton. My brother, Robert, is Viscount of Appleton, his heir. We Vambraces have always been men of honor. Unfit as I may be in a certain sense, as all men are, to associate with your nieces, Mr. Churchton——" He had proceeded this far, when Vincent broke in:

"Kindly leave them out of the discussion," but Mr. Churchton answered him quietly:

"No, boy, our friend is right. It is because of the girls that we have called him to account. Go on with what you were saying."

Vambrace's face had paled to the very lips, but still controlling himself he resumed:

"While, as I say, I am not fit to associate with them in a certain sense, I swear to you that I have never wronged any woman, and if I have at times accepted favors from their hands, it was only when I had known that others had received the same before me. Women have been too good to me, and I am afraid that I have made some love me for the time being, but again I swear to you that I never had a wife, nor have I ever given a single woman the right to lay any claims to me in that way by going through any ceremony with her, nor have I upon my conscience the ruin of any innocent woman. Further than this I cannot go, except to bring you face to face with several warm personal friends, who can repeat my assertion that I have never been in Japan, and they have been with me on many of my voyages, and know of my movements as well as I do myself. That is the absolute truth. If I did not appreciate the friendship accorded me by your party, and long to continue it, I assure you that I would have never made so lengthy an explanation. Hitherto my word of honor has been enough. With people of my nationality, a lie between gentlemen is impossible, and we do not deem every man an adventurer because he happens to have traveled a little and appears to have a sufficiency of money. Is this sufficient? If not, I am obliged to say good-night and good-by," and he looked proudly at the three men before him.

Without a moment's hesitation Mr. Churchton grasped his hand, saying heartily:

"My dear boy, of course we believe you. I knew you spoke the truth right at first, but these boys are such young fire-eaters when anything concerns our girls, that I let you go on. Of course we will continue friends. Shake hands, boys, and let's forget the incident. I suppose these Orientals have methods of blackmail unknown to us New Yorkers," and having solved the question satisfactorily, the excellent gentleman beamed on all alike.

Alex felt Vincent give him a vigorous dig in the ribs, and so when the latter advanced and grasped the Englishman by the hand, he followed, although his heart did not go with the clasp. Vincent only said quietly and courteously:

"If we have been overcareful, Mr. Vambrace, if you have sisters you will appreciate our solicitude."

To which the Englishman replied heartily:

"My dear chap, I think all the more of you for it. I have no sisters, but I honor the sex of my mother too much to object."

Alex only muttered, for he was unlearned in diplomacy and the ways of the world:

"We'll call it off, if everything is straight," and was disconcerted by the warmth of the hand clasp he received.

As the three left the room, Quinton Vambrace went wearily to the window and, raising it, let the moist, sickeningly warm wind blow over his face. Quietly he stood there for a few moments, then, turning, went to a decanter which stood on the table, and, pouring out some brandy, gulped it down, muttering:

"'My curse rests upon you and all who come after you.' Yes, poor, wronged, girl, I believe that is truer than you think for. Shall I remain, or go to Norway as I had planned until those lovely eyes lighted my soul? No, darling Lillian. For weal or woe, I remain, and the curse may do its bloody worst."

At the same time the two young Americans were talking in Vincent's room, which opened into that of Alex, and they concluded their earnest conversation with:

"I have hated the damned Englishman ever since he forced himself upon us on the Nipon Maru," from Alex, and the quiet remonstrance of Vincent:

"See here, old fellow, a gentleman doesn't swear, you know. Keep yourself well pulled together. If uncle is bound to receive him, we must do the same, but we will keep our eyes open, and if he trips even the least bit, out he goes," to which Alex replied:

"You just take a hundred to one shot we will watch, and I hope we will find him tripping, as you call it—don't you?"

Vincent paused a moment, reflecting gravely for a moment, then replied:

"I can't say I do, Alex, for I like the man. Of course, I realize that we are rivals, and I am afraid of him, for he has the polish, ease and experience that I never could attain, but as man to man, I like him."

Alex listened to the young man's remarks, then, with an expression of deepest disgust upon his open boyish face, turned and walked into his own room, saying defiantly as he slammed the door:

"Oh, hell!"

CHAPTER III.

"What concentrated joy, or woe, is bless'd or blighted love!"

The morning after the ball dawned radiant and beautiful as only a morning can in Hongkong, the most exquisite gem in the necklace of seaport towns which the Orient proudly boasts. The harbor, the finest in the world, was filled with vessels from every nation. Here the French flag floated bravely in the slight breeze, proclaiming Liberty, Fraternity, Equality; there Japan was represented by several warships, small as compared with the mighty ironclads of England, flying the Union Jack upon which the sun never sets, but thoroughly modern; the Stars and Stripes could be seen upon more than one noble vessel, well representing its glorious nation, while other crafts, intended for both war and peace, displayed the colors of their several nations and looking like so many great ribbons floating in the wind beneath the blue Oriental sky, above the clear waters beneath.

About the two islands which form Hongkong—Victoria Island and Kooloon—circle the mountains, green verdured throughout the year, and culminating in the Peak, on the topmost pinnacle of which is the signal station.

A lady of possibly thirty sat at her window in the early morning air, gazing out upon the marvelous sights before her, and yet with eyes which saw not, for her thoughts were directed inward. A beautiful woman, too, with hair of a rich purplish red, that waved and rippled all over her well-shaped head; deep Irish blue eyes, fringed with dark lashes; a clear, olive complexion, without color, save that given by crimson lips, a trifle over full. Her figure was perfect in its curves and long lines, and she was always exquisitely gowned, although she dressed appropriately to her position, for she was Cleodolinda Humphries, companion of the two Greencastle girls. The night before she had worn a plain black lace dress, without flowers or jewels, but the lace had been the finest of its kind, and the shoulders and arms which it disclosed were more beautiful than any other ornaments.

This morning, as she sat there looking out upon beauties her eyes failed to note, there was an expression upon the handsome face none of her present associates had ever seen. There was a hunted look in the eyes, a frightened, drawn expression about her month, and her firm teeth bit nervously at the ripe, red lips. Her shapely hands, unadorned save by a wedding ring and a magnificent diamond keeper, twisted and untwisted like so many writhing snakes. Thus had she sat, leaving her charges several hours before. From time broken words fell from her lips, but at last she rose and, pushing back her heavy hair, hissed through her clenched teeth:

"I am going to get at the bottom of this. Ah, Quinton Vambrace, it is a foolish thing to make any woman your enemy, even if you are rich, handsome, popular and win hearts easily! The men may be turned from the track; those babies blinded by your attractions, but you have one upon your trail who will never rest or turn from her purpose until you are unmasked and the whole truth known. More than one haughty head will then lie in the dust, and other hearts than mine weep tears of blood."

CHAPTER IV.

"Lovers have an ineffable instinct which detects the presence of rivals."

In the few days which followed, Quinton Vambrace proved himself a most delightful companion to the men of the party, for Rosebud had been too frightened to recover from it easily, and Lillian and their companion had refused to go out without her. The three men had been at the Jockey Club, the Hongkong Club, and the Tennis Club, and had met many men among the most exclusive circles of the city, by all of whom Vambrace seemed to be held in great esteem. Even Alex had to admit that a man who could gain and hold the friendship of men of their caliber must have some good points about him. Then, too, as the Americans moved about in the entertaining company their new friend provided for them, they discovered many things. To their astonishment they found themselves able, even forced, to drink what would have seemed an excessive amount of liquor of various kinds, the climate being such as to demand the use of stimulants, and also one in which their effect is not so seriously felt.

"What would my trainer say?" laughed Alex, as he tossed off a cocktail in company with Vincent, as the two were about to join their guardian, Vambrace and several of his friends, at tiffin, as lunch is always called there.

"Your trainer would probably suggest that you give up several of your present habits, such as always taking a chair or a rickshaw, even if it is only around the block." Vincent laughed, loking at the manly young figure before him, which had been the pride of the gridiron and the boast of the gym., which was now certainly taking on considerable flesh, a fact not to be regretted by his friends, for heretofore the boyish face had been too strained with training, and the large bones a little too sparsely covered for real attractiveness.

"But, I say, Vin, this air! It takes the backbone right out of a man," Alex objected, as the two strolled off to meet their friends.

Not a word had been exchanged between any of them relative to the unhappy incident of the ball. When the gentlemen had met the morning following it, Vambrace had shown such a graceful, ready courtesy that insensibly they had yielded to its charm and were delightfully entertained.

After tiffin, the four men stood smoking on a veranda overlooking the harbor, when Mr. Churchton said:

"By the way, I think the girls are ready to appear once more. Rosie seems to be herself once more, and, if you say, so, we might go up the Peak, Vambrace."

That gentleman, throwing away his cigar, replied courteously:

"That will be charming. Suppose we get our chairs at once and call for the ladies," and he led the way, his heart beating wildly, for since that night when he had held the lovely American girl in his arms as they danced about the flower-decked room, he had not gazed upon Lillian's sweet face, and his very soul longed for a glance from her dear eyes.

As Vincent and Alex followed behind Vambrace and their guardian, the latter muttered:

"Confound that fellow, with his broad 'A'! I am dead sick of his saying 'Chawming, bawth,' and such things."

"Nonsense! they all do. The other day I went into the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation to have a letter of credit cashed for uncle, and I was directed to go to the 'clark' behind such and such a window. It took me ten minutes to realize they meant clerk. Hold your horses, bubby. Probably they laugh at our flat way of speaking. You know they are the oldest nation."

"Who—the Chinese?"

"Say, this is getting on your nerves. You know I mean the English."

Having by this time entered their chairs, they did not try to continue their conversation, but gazed in wonderment at the strange scenes about them. Here was a red-faced man in a chair, beating the coolie who held the front poles, screaming at the top of his voice expressions more forcible than elegant; there sat a blind beggar, holding out his hand for alms. Seeing the latter, Mr. Churchton said half-angrily to Vambrace, whose chair was beside his:

"Is there anything in this climate that affects the eyes? Half the beggars appear blind—or is it a clever dodge?"

"They are really blind. Lust of money causes it—not theirs, but that of their parents. Blind and crippled children appeal so much better than whole ones that it is a pleasant custom of the poorer classes to put out the eyes and distort the limbs of their newly born."

"Horrible, horrible! Don't let the girls know, will you?"

The younger man smiled sadly:

"If I could, Mr. Churchton, I would keep every evil from their minds," and then it was that the kindly gentleman knew that another suitor had arrived for one of his girls.

This new thought caused him to be somewhat grave, but no sadness could prevail against the merriment of Rosebud, or the gentle sweetness of Lilly, when they were all seated in the cars on the tramway which was to take them up the great peak, Hongkong's pride and the home of the most wealthy of her people.

"Isn't this delightful?" Rosie cried, hanging out of the side of the car, to the imminent danger of life and clothing.

"I feel like a bird now. Remember, Sis, how I used to play I was a bird when we were little?"

All traces of her fright were gone, and she bloomed out as gay, childish and roguish as ever, wringing Alex's heart and providing amusement for every one. Mr. Churchton beamed on all alike, having decided to let providence take its own course, having learned by a sad experience in the past that it is not always the best man that a girl loves. Alex and Rose were laughing together, teasing each other and the party. Mrs. Humphries was smilingly listening to Vincent's rather absent-minded remarks, while Vambrace's dark head was bent over Lillian's golden one, although he always replied promptly to any question put to him about the surrounding country.

At last Mrs. Humphries said in a tone which could be heard only by her companion:

"You have answered three of my questions at random, Mr. Lyndstock. Would you rather be quiet?"

The young man turned quickly toward her. How well she understood him!

"I beg your pardon," he said courteously.

"You do not approve?" nodding her head toward Lillian and her absorbed gallant.

"I cannot say that, but I will confess to you, dear Mrs. Humphries, that I am jealous. Meanly, hatefully and yet naturally jealous," and his honest young face flamed crimson.

Was there a faint reflection of color on the clear complexion of the lady as she answered?

"I do not wonder. Still, he is just the kind of a man to win a girl's heart," she said.

"That's just where the misery comes in," he rejoined promptly. "If he was not fascinating, why would I dread him?"

"I fear for the dear child," was the concerned whisper. "He is a man of the world, she a schoolgirl."

Just here Rosebud cried out delightedly:

"Just see the view! Come here, Mr. Vambrace, and tell me everything," then as he neared her she drew him a little to one side and said, softly:

"I must speak to you." Then she appeared very much interested at his explanations, but when they alighted from the little car, she, with an adroitness he would scarcely have given her credit for, kept widening the distance between herself and the remainder of the party.

In the meanwhile, Vincent had joined Lillian and began asking her about Rose, whose spirits he felt were a little too high to be natural. Lillian smiled gently:

"Rosie was ready to come out the next day, I think, but Mrs. Humphries decided we had better stay indoors and rest. I was glad, too, for that ball, so soon after our long journey, was a little too much for me. But, Vin, dear, you look pale and unlike yourself. Is the climate too much for you?" and she laid her little hand upon his arm in the simple, sisterly fashion which had prevailed between them, for it was not until he had seen her so much in the company of the Englishman that Vincent realized he loved her.

"Several things have been bothering me. I have missed you girls, I think."

"Dear boy," she said, half-laughingly, then continued: "How do you like this place?"

"I do not like it, Lilly," he blurted out almost as bluntly as Alex himself. "There is an unreal, greenhouse sort of an atmosphere here. No one lives here—that is, no one who is a foreigner. They are all just here for the time being. They hate the climate, which is beastly," wiping his forehead as he spoke, "and there is such a lavish display of wealth, and such horrible poverty. Why, dear, you could never imagine the awful suffering among the coolie classes. No government is right which allows this."

"But, Vin, dear, there is suffering at home. No country is free from it."

"Do families there live off a few cents a week? Say, Lilly, I saw a toy for sale the other day in one of the bazaars, kept by an East Indian, by the way, who wears his hair banged over his forehead, and side combs over his ears. This toy was made of the Chinese coin called 'kash.' It takes a thousand of them to make one cent of our money. Lilly, that toy sword was a foot in length and covered with these coins, and yet not over two hundred of them were used."

The gentle voice of the girl broke in upon his complaint like that of an angel peacemaker:

"Vin, dear, God is here as well as at home. We must not presume to find fault with His plans. We are taught that all this suffering is working toward some great end in the universal plan. It will all come out right in the end," and she raised to his a face as pure and free from dross as though it had just been released from Heaven itself.

The young man sighed deeply. "I feel these things so deeply. When I get back home, Lilly, I am going to become a little of a philanthropist, if I can. I am going to devote my knowledge of the law and my wealth toward helping the poor of earth. I want to do some good in the world."

"Like dear uncle," whispered the girl who, in spite of herself, was wondering where her much more entertaining companion had gone.

"No, no, he isn't a philanthropist, child. He likes to have us all about him. We all have money, are not dependent upon him in any way, except for his love and care, and I know we all appreciate it, but can't you see, Lilly, there are people starving this very minute for help? Others would have taken care of us if he had not, for we are among the fortunate of the earth," and the young man's eyes glowed with an enthusiasm Lilly had never seen him display before. It seemed to him that on this ride he had found his life work, and his soul was wondrously uplifted as he thought of the good he and the lovely girl by his side could accomplish, and he no longer felt any fear of his accomplished rival.

In the meanwhile, that gentleman had joined Rose, who by this time was waiting for him in the shelter of a huge boulder, and without waiting for any formal words, she said hastily:

"Mr. Vambrace, I do not know of the rights or wrongs of the matter, but I want to tell you what frightened me the other night."

The man simply bent his head.

"I was standing there with Alex, laughing and talking, when suddenly a terrible creature stepped into the light from the windows. You and Lilly were just passing, and your head was bent over hers like you do, as though there were no one else in the world but her for you. The thing, who seemed made of blackness covered with squirming snakes, with a horrible painted face above, raised her hand and muttered. I could hear her as clear as I hear my own voice, although she spoke very low:

"'Water, wind nor storm can hurt a hair of my head, but I call down the fury of the tempest upon you, Quinton Vambrace.' And oh! then, Mr. Vambrace, I remembered how ill you looked that night at sea when we had such a terrible thunderstorm. I wondered so, for the men I have known have never cared about such things," and she paused to look up at the ghastly face of her companion.

"She uttered my name, did she?" he said, in a low voice.

"Just as I have told you, and then I cried out and fainted," in a tone of some disgust.

"Have you mentioned this to any one else?"

"Not a soul. It was your business, not mine," was the quiet answer.

"May I ask you to keep this secret for me now? I am very unhappy, Miss Rosie. You are right—I am afraid of a storm, as afraid as I can be, but if you have any mercy in your heart for a victim of circumstances, refrain from telling others, will you?" and the pathetic tone in the rich, deep voice brought the tears to the girl's sympathetic eyes.

"You may count on me," was the simple reply, then Rose asked:

"Do you love my sister?"

From chin to forehead the man's face flushed a deep crimson; then he replied, huskily:

"Better than anything and everything on earth."

"Vincent loves her, too."

"I do not think she cares for him," was the low reply.

Rose stood loking at him a moment, all of the child gone from her, before she said slowly:

[Continued on Page Eleven.]

Any boy who has 2 cents can turn it into 20 dollars

TWO CENTS invested in a postage stamp on a letter to us will bring information concerning our offer to boys who sell THE SATURDAY EVENING POST. By our plan any boy can earn many dollars each week without risking anything but the stamp in asking for information. No capital required to begin—we furnish the first week's supply free. If you wish to begin at once earning money, write to-day asking us to send the magazines. We will also send booklet, "How Boys Make Money," written by some of our successful boys.

$250.00 IN EXTRA CASH PRIZES for good work next month

THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY, 2974 Arch Street, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

RIVALS FOR WEALTH;

OR

GREATER THAN GOLD.

BY ELLA MARTIN.

[Copyright by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 24, June 11. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OLD MAN'S DIARY.

Ethelyn had left the grounds, leaving her uncle and cousin walking together.

The women were indeed scheming for his wealth, but in a different way from what he expected.

Ethelyn Cleave sat in her own room at that moment, with the door locked, and before her on her lap lay an open book—the old man's diary.

The pages were closely written in a masculine hand, and they disclosed the secret of Mr. Dalton's life.

She had abstracted the diary while the desk was open, and now she meant to peruse it at her leisure. It was somewhat disjointed, but she gathered its meaning easily enough. It was the story of a woman's treachery and a husband's jealousy, and began thus:

"July 18, 18—.—They have met at last. I knew it would come to this. I have watched for it, and I saw the meeting. Just a quick uplifting of the white lids, a tremor of the lips, then a flash of the eyes and a compression about the mouth, and Marcia, my bride, my beautiful bride, is mistress of herself once more. She gives him her hand—that fair, tapering hand that she has let me kiss without a shudder—and yet—and yet, it was there—the repulsion, and she my wife. Oh, God! But he comes, and the glad light leaps to her eyes, the crimson to her cheeks, and betrays the truth. And the world saw it—that meeting—our world!

"And he—his hand trembles, his voice quavers through that greeting, and the world knows it all. Society stands open-eyed and open-mouthed, and the band plays as before. The music is harsh now, or so it seems to me; it jars on my ears; but those two go whirling away together down the long room in step to the strains of a waltz.

"And I—I am standing here like a statue, cold and still, but there is murder in my heart. The hot blood is surging through my veins, and I am going mad!

"The thick leaves of an oleander hide me from view, and no one knows—no one sees—that I am here.

"They have paused at the farther end of the room—these two—and he looks down at her and smiles. I know how their hearts beat—and I could kill him! I will some day. I swear it!

"They have gone out onto the balcony now; they have forgotten me—forgotten everything but each other. How dare they?

"But I will creep closer, I will know what they say! And beneath the tangled vines of the climbing roses I crouch, and they come nearer.

"'You have not forgotten, Marcia,' he says, softly, 'you could not, after all?'

"'I tried, Justin, I tried so hard!' Marcia's voice trembles. Of course, woman that she is, she must needs lead him to believe she had striven to do her duty and forget; when, in truth, she found comfort in remembering.

"This acting interests me so much that I almost forget Marcia is my wife, Justin Gray her one-time lover.

"Ah! love never dies. Sometimes it is turned to hate—sometimes. Ah! sometimes it means death to oneself, or to another—and I could kill him this moment if I dared!

"How handsome he is, as he smiles down upon her in the moonlight! Dark and grave and tender. And I—I am so different; there is something lacking, though I am not bad to look at. But that easy grace and self-confident man-of-the-world bearing! Why did she marry me—why?

"I listen—they are speaking again.

"'How could you have believed me false, Marcia, how could you?'

"Oh, the yearning in his tones! and the desire in my heart to strangle the gentle voice in his throat!

"'I do not know,' wailed Marcia. 'I was mad, I think. Oh, Justin, forgive me! I have suffered—I have paid dearly'——

"My God! Am I mad or dreaming? I, Homer Dalton, and this woman, Marcia, my wife. I am paralyzed. I cannot move, or surely I would slay the pair of them. And she so beautiful, so seemingly innocent, so precious—until now!

"But now she shall suffer for this. Her punishment shall be worse than death. It is not love that boils up in my heart now. Ha! ha! ha! it is hardly love!

"Now they move away, and there are tears in her eyes. He kisses her hands and murmurs to her softly, whilst I creep forth from my hiding place and steal silently away. Shortly, I find myself in the garden and wander among the shrubs. There is tragedy in the air—I feel it.

"It is an hour or more that I wander about, then a tall form descends the steps of the villa and walks slowly down the graveled path. I move nearer him, I know not why; but there is a club grasped in my hand, and I crouch behind the shrubbery that borders the walk.

"The man comes nearer—he is past. I spring to my feet—I, Homer Dalton, and the cudgel is aloft. It falls on the head of the unsuspecting party and he falls a corpse and lies still in the shadow.

"His watch and money—I take them—it will be thought the motive was robbery then and no one will suspect me.

"She will suffer now—not because she believes him false this time, but because he is dead. Ah! she will suffer!

"With the watch—a gold one—in my pocket (I have it yet—that watch—though I know not why I keep it)—I enter the ballroom, dance one set with my wife—and then take her home. She is a good actress, and no one knows.

"She has taken her farewell of him, of course, and does not expect to see him again.

"I will take her to the seashore, I tell her in the morning, if she will have her packing done immediately—only a week's outing, she need not make elaborate preparations. Then I took her to a lonely country place in the hills of Virginia.

"I procured the daily papers which gave the details of the murder, but I had not dared to look at them till now—till Marcia was a prisoner in a suite of rooms made safe for that purpose.

"Then I read—and oh, horrors! it was not he—not Justin Gray whom I had slain, but another! I had made a mistake in the darkness. I was a murderer—I—and yet Justin Gray lived! And I had told Marcia that I had murdered him.

"She would have killed me then had she been able. But she learned the truth some way—one of my servants was a traitor—and she wrote to him—to Justin Gray—I suppose, for he came and they fled together. In some way she escaped, through the aid of the unfaithful servant, no doubt, for he, too, was missing.

"I did not follow them, I dared not. But I knew so long as I did not molest them they would not drag my crime to light. Then I came here.

"They went abroad. Whether they are still living I do not know, nor care. I have lived by myself and have hated women all these years for her sake. Still, they attract me—I love to look upon them the same as on flowers. They are sweet as the blossoms themselves, but there is a decayed spot sometimes in the heart of a flower, and always in the heart of a woman.

"'Sweet and rosy, and fair of skin,
Nothing but ruin and ashes within.'

"I have lived since for revenge on the sex. I have had many experiences and have invariably found women treacherous and scheming; but I have never been deceived by them, for I knew what to expect.

"And no women will ever be the better for having known Homer Dalton; likewise no woman will ever inherit the wealth he has accumulated. Let her deceive herself into thinking so if she will—all the better, her disappointment will be the more bitter in the end.

"Ah! I have some years left me, and I will play with the hopes of a few of them yet!"

Here the confession ended. And though marked a diary, this record was not in daily installments, as we have seen.

Ethelyn, having reached the end, now closed the book with a snap.

"Ah!" she said, and a quiet smile crept about her lips. "No woman, you say, my respected uncle, will ever inherit your hoarded wealth. We shall see about that. I think I hold the winning card now. You will make your will immediately, Mr. Homer Dalton, or swing for that old crime in your old age. And you will make it according to my instructions.

"Ah! where are Alberta's hopes now?"

She locked the so-called diary away. He would not miss it just yet, perhaps, and tomorrow she would be ready to spring the trap on him.

He would be her victim then; a woman should win this time—at last, as at first.

She went softly down the stairs, a triumphant smile wreathing her beautiful, curved lips. Let Alberta entertain him after this; she had no need to make an effort, for she held the winning card, and the game was sure to be hers.

Luncheon was served, and Ethelyn, as usual, sat opposite to her uncle; but she seemed absorbed with her own thoughts, and Alberta was left to entertain him.

"Do you ever drive out, Uncle Homer?" asked Alberta, flashing a look from her dark eyes upon the old man.

"Sometimes," he answered shortly, "but I won't today, I think."

"No, because I want you to. You always do the opposite thing, don't you? Well, you are an original character, but not a very agreeable one, I am sure," said Alberta, frankly; then she added in a playful tone:

"When will you drive, Mr. Contrariness?"

"When I please, Miss Impudence."

"Well, when will you please, if you please?" saucily.

"Well, I don't know, exactly."

"Some time when I don't want to go, I suppose. Well, I sha'n't want to go tomorrow."

"Then we will go tomorrow." Mr. Dalton's eyes beamed. This was living, this was spirit, and something to put vim into his fagged-out body; and it delighted him. He could not spare Alberta if she was like this always.

And Ethelyn, he could not spare her, either—one to excite him, and the other to sooth him. Yes, he would keep them both, and in the end—well, they should have their wages—nothing more.

He could play with their hopes, tantalize them to his heart's content, and then disappoint them. Meanwhile, he would use them for his own amusement.

"If you should go tomorrow," said Alberta, "will you please leave me at home? I should so hate to go along."

"No, I shall take you."

Then they both laughed, he a more childish laugh than that of his niece; for he was seventy-six now, and in his second childhood.

"Don't drive into Carthage, Uncle Homer. I should so dislike to go there."

"There is precisely where we are going."

"Then I shall stay at hime."

"You will do nothing of the sort."

Again the two laughed merrily. And Alberta had gained her point.

If he must be managed just contrary to what other people were managed, why, it was easy enough. However, he was not one to be worked that way without being aware of it.

When evening came, Ethelyn entered the study adjoining the old man's sleeping apartment. He was expecting her, it seemed, for he was already seated in his wheelchair, in which James could wheel him to his bedside. This chair was seldom called into use before Ethelyn came, except during the bad spells to which he was subject.

But tonight Ethelyn had not the slightest intention of performing the usual services. She went up to him, and, standing directly before him, she gazed into his face triumphantly.

"Do you know what I have been doing to you every night since I came here?" she asked.

"Putting me to sleep, my dear, with your magic touch."

"Yes, a mesmeric sleep."

He sprang out of his chair, a flush of anger rising to his face.

"You huzzy!" he cried wrathfully; "how dared you?"

She waved her hand toward his seat, as if she commanded him to resume it, and, strangely enough, he obeyed. He did not speak, but his face was growing purple with rage.

"Yes," she said, "I was slowly, but surely, getting you under my influence. I should have had you completely in my power in a short time. I can yet, if I will, for it is too late for you to help yourself; and eventually you would make your will in my favor."

"Then why don't you keep on, you Jezebel?" he demanded angrily.

"Because the work was distasteful to me," she replied. "I have a shorter, easier road to success."

An oath left the old man's lips.

"When a man tampers with a woman," he growled, "he may expect to be worsted. But not by a long shot! I would die before I would be beaten by a woman!"

"You may have a chance to do just that, uncle mine."

He did not understand her, and kept on fuming. The very thought that there was now no remedy for his sleeplessness was a severe blow to him.

Ah! those restful nights when he had felt himself in a beautiful land of dreams—when he had not been obliged to lie awake and think of the past, to shudder at the sound of the wind in the trees and sweeping through the orchard.

Often and often he had wondered about the man he had killed, way back in the years when he was young. He had not meant to kill an innocent man; and he had never known what sorrow he had wrought in the lives of others, how many friends had suffered on account of the death of his innocent victim.

But the thought that had troubled him all these years was that his rival was alive, that he had not killed him, and, worst of all, they were together—the woman who was his wife, and the man he hated.

But now it was all past, and the passion he had entertained for his faithless wife had died, but the hatred, the vengefulness, lived on. Only, sometimes, he was afraid in the night; sometimes thoughts of his innocent victim haunted him. And these last nights had been so free from it all. But now he was to lose the soothing influence he had come to depend upon, and he hated the girl before him because of his loss.

"Speak! What do you mean?" he demanded fiercely, rising from his chair again. "What are you up to now, you descendant of Mother Eve?"

She came close up to him, as at first, and said quietly:

"I purloined your diary, Uncle Homer, and I have read it. I still have it in my possession I find that you are not so free from crime as the world believes you to be. And now, if you please, you will make your will, leaving the bulk of your fortune to be, and thus be sure of dying a natural death. You see I have you in my power.

"This being in uncertainty as to whether I am to inherit your money is not to my taste. We will see a lawyer tomorrow, won't we, uncle? You will drive me to Carthage instead of Alberta—eh?"

A laugh suggestive of triumph left her lips, but it died away presently in a gurgling sound, for the old man was upon her, fiercely clutching her by the throat.

A moent later she lay lifeless on the floor, with the marks of his fingers on her white neck.

Then the bell rang to summon James.

CHAPTER V.

ROBERT GRIEVE.

Robert Grieve, the young and popular lawyer, who unconsciously figured in the will of Homer Dalton, sat in his office on the day following the tragedy at Dalton House, when the door opened and a tall, stately woman entered.

He went forward and bowed gallantly, inquiring in a suave manner how he could serve her.

His smiling politeness might have impressed some women, but Alberta's heart sank within her at once. This undersized, black-eyed, black-mustached person was repugnant to her. What had she expected? she asked herself, as a vision of a tall, blond man rose before her. Jack's face came between her and the slight, dark man who so courteously sat her a chair.

She flashed a look up at him from her limpid, brown eyes, a glance that impressed him most strangely, and made him the more anxious to serve her.

"This is Mr. Grieve, is it not?" she asked sweetly.

"Yes, madam. Can I be of service to you?"

"I would like to consult you in the interest of a friend of mine, a widow, who has difficulties in settling her late husband's affairs, but who cannot come to you at present for consultation. I will state the case presently. It is very warm here; may I sit by the open window a moment?"

"Certainly, madam," and Robert Grieve placed a seat by the window.

She thanked him with a smile.

"I will pay you for the time I waste," she said easily. "Have you other clients waiting?"

"No, madam, not this afternoon," he replied. "I am entirely at your service."

Then the two exchanged a few commonplace remarks about the weather and the country round about the city, and soon became quite well acquainted.

Alberta was a brilliant talker, and it was her purpose to grow confidential just now; and before she had begun the story she claimed to have come to tell, he knew where she was staying, the beauty and delightful coolness of the country lanes, and also her prospects of inheriting her uncle's wealth.

At last, with an apology for wasting so much of his valuable time, she began to tell him something of her friend's difficulties. But suddenly she paused and glanced at her watch, and with a merry laugh she exclaimed:

"I shall have to postpone the conclusion of the story, as it is a long one and is very intricate, and I promised Uncle Homer to meet him at the postoffice before this. He drove me into town, and will be waiting. Please name your charges. I will pay you and come again to finish my conversation. I had no idea I had taken up so much time in conversation, the hours passed so quickly and pleasantly. I will drive alone next time, then there will be no reason to hurry back."

"I am honored, dear lady, that you should have found the time pass so quickly. I shall certainly not take a fee, for you have only just begun the consultation, and I have passed a most pleasant afternoon," replied Robert Grieve, gallantly. "It is not often I am favored with the company of a charming young woman. Our delightful chat has broken a prosaic, dreary routine of business. I only hope the story you have to tell will necessitate several visits from you."

Alberta laughed musically.

"I have enjoyed it, too. But I hardly think the business I have to transact will take as long as that; only, she—my friend—may need to send me more than once. She does not wish her name disclosed, hence she desired me to do her business for her."

After lingering at the door for some time interchanging remarks of a pleasant nature, Alberta Lynn took her leave, knowing well that she had made a favorable impression on her uncle's heir.

As for Robert, he went back to his office chair and sat down. How dull, how prosaic, the office seemed!

"What a glorious creature! What eyes! And what a smile! And she was to come again soon, she had said so. Perhaps he would see her often, for—well, in truth, he needed country air and exercise. He had sat in the stuffy office too long without vacation. He would devote his Sunday afternoons to drives, after this. He was in a position now not to mind livery hire.

He had struggled long and unceasingly, and at last had won a start in life. Now, he thought, he might allow himself the liberty to look around for the pleasures of life.

He went to his boarding house that night with an elastic step and a light heart. He had had several clients after Alberta went away, but he had seemed strangely distraught, and did not remember now what their business had been. But the world seemed suddenly fair and life interesting at last. And all because of a woman's soft, seductive voice and tender glances.

When Alberta left the lawyer's office she went back to the phaeton and waited for her uncle, who, it seemed, was not yet ready.

During their drive home Mr. Dalton questioned his niece concerning Ethelyn's absence from breakfast.

"I did not see her at all this morning," Alberta replied. "You know we have separate apartments," she continued, smiling up at him, "because you did not dare to trust two women who were rivals for the same position in the same quarters. Whether you expected one to smother the other with a pillow, I do not know."

"It is well enough to be on the safe side," he said sagely, with a wise shake of his head. "One never knows whom to trust, and my experience with women has taught me not to trust any of them.

"I suppose Ethelyn will turn up all right after a while?" he added, with an inflection of the voice as if putting a question to her, and at the same time peering scrutinizingly into her face.

She straightened herself up indignantly.

"Why shouldn't she? If she does not it is not my fault. I am not Ethelyn's keeper."

"Neither was Cain his brother's keeper," replied the old man with a harsh laugh.

"Uncle, what do you mean?"

A vague fear began tugging at Alberta's heart-strings.

"Nothing, nothing at all, my dear. Of course Ethelyn is all right. I was only thinking of the possibilities of treachery and crime; that is all. I have seen so much of it in my day," and Homer Dalton sighed piously.

"Uncle Homer, if you were not my uncle, and an old man, I would leave your house his very night. How dare you talk as if you believed me capable of treachery and underhandedness, and of scheming to get your miserable money?"

"I dare because I know it is true. You know you are figuring on having my fortune, Alberta Lynn."

For a moment she was silent. She remembered her visit to the office of Robert Grieve, whom Homer Dalton had made his heir. What had been her motive? Her own heart answered the question, and she knew she was guilty of maneuvering for the thousands the old man would leave at his death.

"If by that you mean I am making calculations on inheriting your money, provided you choose me to stay with you instead of Ethelyn, it is quite true; but as to using underhanded means to get you to keep me instead of my cousin, I plead not guilty.

"I am willing to let you judge for yourself which one of us is the most necessary to you. And I will stay my month of probation unless you get too uncivil. In that case——"

"Well, well, we won't quarrel."

"That will be as you will it. I am inclined to be agreeable, but I won't stand everything."

Alberta was in a position to talk independently now; for had she not made the acquaintance of the heir? Besides, she understood the old man well enough to know that her independent manner would take with him better than servility; it looked more as if she was not greatly concerned about the possession of his wealth.

It was nearing sunset when the two drove into the yard at Dalton House, and handed the reins over to James, the only man about the place.

There was a short period before the meal would be served, and Alberta, instead of going into the house, turned her steps in the direction of the timbered knoll back of the orchard.

She wanted to think. There was no use of trying to win the favor of this contrary old man; neither she nor Ethelyn would be likely to ever be mentioned in his will. Of that she felt convinced. He would tantalize them both by trying to raise their hopes, first of one and then of the other, no doubt; but the old will would stand.

Therefore, she would make hay while the sun shone—she would cast her spell over Robert Grieve and she would be his promised wife before it came to be known that he was the one chosen to inherit the Dalton fortune. She need not marry him if it should happen that a new will was made; she would find some way out of it.

Just now she felt that she would rather outwit Homer Dalton than anything else, just for the satisfaction of getting the better of him, if she could only be sure that he would know it when it was accomplished.

And she would not like to be beaten by Ethelyn, either, who, of course, was trying to win.

If only she was worthy of Jack! The fortune might go, then. If she possessed his love, what would she care for the wealth of the whole wide world? But Jack would not love her if he knew.

She looked up quickly as a shadow fell across her path, and saw Jack Raynor standing before her.

She rose up and held out both hands to him; but she would not let him draw her to his breast.

"Sit down again, Berta," he said gently. "I must talk to you. You would never let me tell you how unworthy I am of your love. You have always insisted on calling me good."

"Not that name, Jack—not 'Berta'—that belonged to—to a young and innocent maiden, not a worldly, hardened woman. Never call me by the old pet name again, Jack, never again."

"Dear one, listen. You know we were innocent children together. But I, too, went away; I, too, knocked about the world and brushed off the innocence and purity which environment, not worth, had given me. At college I was a scapegrace, and came very near being expelled. And now—why, now I am still quite wicked."

A soft, amused laugh left Alberta's lips, and she glanced up with worshipful adoration in her eyes.

"Your attempt to lower yourself to my level in my estimation because you love me, only makes me think more highly of you, makes me feel more unworthy."

"But it is all true, Alberta. I am not the saint you believe me to be, really I am not, dear."

"But you are true, Jack, you are not a sham, at least. You don't know, Jack, oh! you don't understand, and I can't tell you, not without losing your esteem, and it is all I have left—all I can claim of yourself, Jack. Believe me, and don't press the matter further.

"I meant to marry you once, dear, that was before I learned to love you; but now I would not so wrong you."

"Berta, Berta, was there ever a time when you did not love me? My heart has been yours from very childhood."

"Yes; it was when I first returned from—from my life upon the stage. I did not love you then, for I did not know you—that is, I did not know how strong and loving and gentle you were. But I meant to marry you, because it would be a good match for me; and I was so tired of the stage, of the world, of everything, Jack! And so I made the promise. But after I knew you better I could not do it, dear. I felt my unworthiness too much—the unworthiness I had always known I possessed. But I would have sacrificed you to my ambition if I had not learned to love you; now it will be another."

"That is strange reasoning, Berta. A woman usually weds the man she loves. But who is the other? I mean to kill him."

"Then," she said, with a suggestive smile, "you will be wicked enough to be my husband."

"Alberta, what do all those dark hints mean?" he asked gravely. "What have you ever done that is so terrible? One would think you had committed murder yourself, to hear you talk."

"No, it is worse than that, very much worse. I have robbed the dead. I am a sham, a living lie; I have robbed the dead who loved me, of something more precious than gems—your love."

"Dearest, I do not understand."

"No, not now; but you will some day, for you shall know all.

"I must go now, but I will write to you, I will tell you all the truth. You will not want me then. I shall never see you again, and so, Jack—kiss me once—once more and for the last time."

She leaned against him wearily, as his arms enfolded her and his lips met hers. Then, as she tore herself from his arms with a sob of despair and pain and surging love, she beheld the servant James hurrying in that direction, and without one word or backward glance, she left Jack standing alone among the trees and went forth to meet James.

Her heart vaguely divined some trouble, though she could not grasp its tangible form. But she thought at once of Ethelyn.

"What is the matter, James?" she asked, as they met in the open field.

"Miss Cleave is missing," he answered, impressively, "and she has not been seen since last night. The master sent me for you; he demands your immediate presence in the house."

She answered nothing, and together they made their way across the fields and through the orchard in the gathering dusk.

Strong and sweet the scent of the magnolias came to them on the dew-laden air. And with it a prescience of some impending trouble came to Alberta Lynn.

But she entered the gloomy old parlor with a lofty mien and a heart undaunted.

Her eyes did not flinch as she met the accusing glance of Homer Dalton.

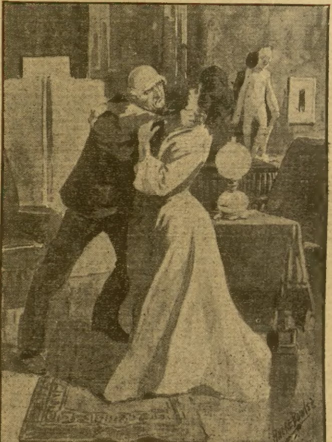
The gloom in the room was as deep as on that other night a short time before, when she had stood in dignified silence and looked contemptuously, scornfully, upon her cousin and rival, Ethelyn Cleave. And now she was about to have that cousin demanded of her. She could read that much in the accusing face of her uncle.

"Alberta Lynn," said the old man in a stern voice, "where is your cousin? Where is Ethelyn?

"No one but you could profit by her sudden disappearance. Speak! Confess all, or tomorrow you and your accomplice, the man whom you meet clandestinely on the timbered knoll, will find yourselves behind prison bars.

"Speak! I command you!"

Another installment of this highly interesting story will appear in next week's Ledger, leading to some very remarkable developments. The free premiums of cameras and patterns are still offered to all subscribers as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.



Her uncle grabbed her murderously by the throat.

A HALF MILLION ACRES.

Government Lands Open for Settlement

in the Rosebud Indian Reservation in Southeastern South Dakota. The Chicago & North-Western Ry. is the direct line from Chicago to Bonesteel on the reservation border. Send 2 cent stamp for pamphlet "New Homes in the West" containing maps and full information as to the allotment of these fertile lands. W. B. Kniskern, 22 Fifth Avenue, Chicago, Ills.

Now They Don't Speak.

"No man could kiss me," said Miss Plainun, with a decided emphasis.

"Oh, I don't know," rejoined Miss Dimples. "Some men are awfully reckless."

MEETS WITH A GHOST.

Neither of them believed in ghosts. At least they said they did not. They were a rather practical young couple, and, when they had moved into the new house on South Tenth street, and the baby had investigated things and seemingly found them to his liking, they thought they would be very happy. The house was one of a number of other similar ones like in a brick block.

The first night in their new home passed off without incident, save, as they were locking up for the night, Smones thought he heard a peculiar moaning sound.

"Listen to the wind," he said to his wife. "Mournful, isn't it?"

She allowed that it was, but as she immediately began to question Smones about whether he had fastened all the windows, he thought she hadn't paid much attention to what he said. Several days were spent in getting the house to rights.

One night when Mr. Smones got home from work, his wife looked worried. She seemed nervous, and started at every sound.

"What is it?" asked Smones.

"I don't know," she replied. "First I thought it was cats. Then I put it down to water running in the next house, you know how it does sing in the pipes, sometimes."

"Ye-yes," said Smones, a little doubtfully, "I guess I know. But what is it all, anyhow? What do you mean about thinking it was cats?"

"It isn't cats," said Mrs. Smones decidedly. "I am sure it is not cats. And the wind hasn't blown a bit today, so it can't be that."

Smones began to look worried. He thought his wife must be going to be ill. She talked so strangely.

"There, don't you hear it?" she exclaimed.

Smones did hear it. He couldn't help it. It was like the gentle wail of a soul in torment, as he would have expressed it had he been writing the story. It began about G in the lower register and worked up to the middle C, and then ran down a chromatic scale to B. It was rather a scarey sound.

"It's been going all day," said Mrs. Smones. "I can't stand it any longer. And do you know three people have died in this house? Mrs. Sminks, next door, told me so today. I didn't tell her about the noise. But I—I want to—to move."

It was getting dusk now. The noise continued. Smones listened.

"It's cats," he said. But when he went to the door and listened there wasn't the least sound of a feline concert.

"It's the wind," he added. But there was no wind.

"It must be in one of the next houses," he ventured, after a pause. But just then the noise sounded unmistakably from his own home. It seemed to come from one of the rooms on the first floor. Mrs. Smones was almost in tears. The youngster was sound asleep. Ghosts didn't trouble him. It was mostly wind colic.

Smones started down cellar from the kitchen. As he got to the door there came a loud wail. It fairly shrieked through the house, a weird sound, that made the cold chills run down his spine. Mrs. Smones gave a little scream. Mr. Smones gave a big jump, for the noise was right in his ear.

"I've got it," he called. "I've found the ghost."

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Smones in a voice that trembled.

"It's the speaking tube," replied Mr. Smones.

And so it proved. The tube went from the kitchen, near the door, to the cellar, to the basement door. It was used by the tradesmen to tell what kind of ice or brand of potatoes they had for sale. The lower whistle had been broken off and offered a wide orifice for the wind to come up. The whistle into the house end of the tube was in working order. It needed only the gentlest zephyr to make the thing work, and the whistle gave out mournful sighs and wails, rising and falling with the force of a wind; hardly perceptible breezes being all that was needed to produce the weird sounds. The tube is stopped up now and the Smones family sleep in peace.

HAS TRIED BOTH

Travel for Health vs. Dieting.

A man who was sent to Europe for his health and finally found a cure in a little change in his diet says:

"I was troubled with dyspepsia for five years and two doctors here in Kenosha that treated me for over a year both told me there was no help for me. Then I had an expert from Chicago, but still received no relief; then followed another expert from Chicago who came to our house two times a month for four months. He gave me up like all the others and told me to take a trip across the ocean, which I did in the year 1899 and came home about as bad as when I started. The doctors told me my stomach lining was full of sores. Then I began to study my own case and learned of the diet recommended by the Postum Cereal Co., so I gave up coffee, pork and all greasy foods and began using Postum Food Coffee. Gradually I got better and better until I am well now as I ever was in my younger days, have no trouble and eat anything fit to eat.

"Sometimes away from home I am persuaded to drink coffee, but I only take a sip of it, for it tastes bitter and disagreeable to me, but the longer I use Postum the better I like it and the better I feel. I could say a great deal more of my experience with Postum, but think this will give everyone a good idea of what leaving off coffee and using Postum can do." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Look in each package for the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

Those Mine Blunders.

It was at St. Petersburg.

"Your Excellency," ventured the prime minister, "we must raise another fund to build warships."

The Czar smiled a wan smile.

"All right," he responded, "and I suppose it will be a sinking fund."

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE HEALING.

ONE MILLION CURED CASES.

You Can Be Cured Whether You Believe in Christian Science or Not.

Over a million cases of disease in every form are now to the credit of Christian Science Healing. Most of these were cases that the doctors had given up as "incurable." Many more were chronic maladies that had baffled their skill for years. All were quickly cured; some were cured instantly. The evidence on these facts is simply indisputable and the curing still goes on. There can be no mistake or misstatement about it. The healers and their work are in public view. As a C. S. healer my many marvelous cures have startled the world. During the past 12 years I have healed diseases of almost every known kind and in every stage of severity. They included many surgical cases where operations were otherwise threatened. I cured cases that were far away from me, as well as those near at hand. And I tell you in like manner that wherever you may dwell, whether one or many physicians have failed to give you relief, if you report the case to me and so desire, you shall be cured. This is no vain or idle promise. My past success fully justifies it. You can be cured whether you believe in Christian Science or not. You can be cured whether in this city or thousands of miles away from me. In our Christian Science Healing distance is of no account; disbelief is not any hindrance; disappointments of the past only make stronger grounds for hope. All you really need is the wish to be healed.

I have just published a little book in regard to this blessed truth called "A Message of Health and Healing." If you write to me I will gladly send you a copy free. It gives many interesting facts and convincing testimonials. Enclose 2-cent stamp for postage. S. A. Jefferson, C. S. B., Suite 634, 112 Dearborn street, Chicago, Ill.

Getting at the Facts.

Miles—The duel has had its day.

Giles—On the contrary, my dear fellow, it never had a day.

Miles—It didn't, eh?

Giles—No; two seconds was its limit.

The Manhattan Limited—Chicago to New York— Is a solid vestibuled train leaving Chicago Union station at 1:00 o'clock p. m daily over Pennsylvania Short Lines, arriving Twenty-third street station, New York, 3:00 o'clock p. m. next day. Buffet parlor-car connection from Harrisburg reaching Baltimore 12:15 noon; Washington 1:20 p. m. Leaving time from Chicago is after arrival of trains from the West and Northwest, forming direct through-train service to the principal cities of the East. C. L. Kimball, A. G. P. Agt., No. 2 Sherman street, Chicago, will answer inquiries about it.

As Indicated.

He—I wonder if the report is true that old Gotrox bought his daughter a husband?

She—I don't know. But the poor fellow looks as if he had been sold.

THE CHICAGO LEDGER
32 YEARS OLD.

Published Every Saturday
—BY—
W. D. BOYCE CO.

All communications should be addressed to
THE CHICAGO LEDGER,
112, 114 DEARBORN ST.,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscriptions to the Chicago Ledger by mail $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, in advance. If not paid in advance, $2.00 a year, $1.00 for six months. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Post Office or Express Money Order, payable to the Chicago Ledger. One Dollar must be added to all foreign yearly subscriptions to pay postage.

Entered at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, as second-class matter.

THE CHICAGO LEDGER
AND
SATURDAY BLADE.

ADVERTISING.

Advertising rate $1.35 per Agate Line, per insertion, for advertisements in The Chicago Ledger and Saturday Blade.

625,000
COPIES WEEKLY
PROVED CIRCULATION.

BACK NUMBERS.

Back numbers of the Ledger can be had by addressing this office. Always give the numbers desired, plainly written, accompanied by your full address, and your order will receive prompt attention. Price 5 cents per copy.

BEWARE OF STRANGERS.

The Ledger employs no traveling agents to solicit subscriptions, and every person working in that capacity is a fraud. No person is authorized to take subscriptions for the Ledger unless he or she be well known in the city or village where they have been appointed agents to sell this paper every week. A liberal reward will be paid for evidence that will enable us to arrest and convict such persons as are now traveling from town to town in different sections of this country, claiming to be agents of the Ledger and thereby defrauding the people. Beware of strangers.

UNION LABEL

ALLIED PRINTING TRADES UNION LABEL COUNCIL CHICAGO, ILL. 236

There are times when a man should tell the truth—and then run.

Carnegie should hasten to distribute a few of his largest libraries in Colorado.

A married man can live on less than a bachelor—if his wife takes in washing.

Any man who thinks he is courting an angel may live to think again.

Buying ready-made clothing has cured many a man of periodical fits.

It isn't always safe to judge a woman's complexion by the label on the box.

A successful man roots while his unsuccessful brother stands around and squeals.

Judge Parker may have heard the old and true saying that silence is radium.

Dowie has got back to Europe and owing to a slight mistake he has not brought the scalp of Australia dangling at his belt.

By scratching around in the bushes almost anywhere Kouropatkin can scare up another Japanese army.

Occasionally a girl marries a man just to keep him from hanging around the house evenings.

Steel stock will soon get to a point where its friends will have to dig a hole if they expect it to go lower.

Hearst appears to be also the favorite son of California as well as of some States in which he never lived.

If Grover Cleveland is nominated Mr. Bryan undoubtedly will have to borrow some type from his friend Hearst to express his feelings.

All the paraphernalia of a civil engineer isn't in it with the strong right arm of a young man when it comes to locating the girl's waist line.

It is a waste of time for a father to attempt to train up his son in the way he should go if he doesn't keep in the middle of the same road himself.

However, Eastern Democrats can only act as though Mr. Bryan were not on earth until the morning of the convention. Then if they will look over the St. Louis papers they will make a great discovery.

St. Petersburg is not alarmed. Having tested the capacity of the Trans-Siberian Railroad it knows that a Japanese army could not be transported east over it in sufficient numbers to overrun the European end of the empire.

A Sinner's Sacrifice;

Or

The Mistress of Riverbluff.

BY ELLEN FRIZELL WYCKOFF.

[Copyright by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 23, June 4. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER V.

"It wasn't as if she might have missed him, and it isn't as if she could plant a flower on his grave," Mrs. Sylvester said, wiping the meager tear drops from her kind old eyes. "These things have a comfort to me. I'm glad my poor husband didn't die among strangers and that his grave isn't on one of those wild prairies. I am, indeed. And I feel for the poor woman."

For the news had reached Riverbluff. Albert Graves, the handsome, reckless scapegrace of the old family, was dead at last. The first intimation of the truth had come in a paper that by a tortuous route of changed addresses had reached Mrs. Graves. At her urgent request Mr. John Quill had forwarded this paper to Mr. Robert Graves, who had gone to the little Western town and satisfied himself of the truth of the newspaper report. Albert was dead.

Mr. Graves wrote careful instructions to John Quill. Mrs. Graves was to remain at Riverbluff. She was to have certain moneys set aside for her own use, certain lands deeded to her. She was, in fact, to have for her own her husband's share of the estate. She must be free and independent, but Mr. Graves asked as a special favor that her home should be at Riverbluff.

When Doctor Black heard of it, he shook his wise old head. He had been making a professional visit to Mrs. Graves, for the sudden death of her husband had unnerved her, and he was talking to Elsie Cameron in the library.

"I shall never understand it. It must always be one of the unexplainable mysteries. But I was as sure that Robert Graves was dying when I left him that spring night as I am that I am living now. If he had died then you would have been a very rich woman, Miss Elsie. As it is——"

"Yes," she interrupted, a hard green glint in the blue of her pretty, wide-open eyes. I saw him—oh, what a terrible sight it was! I went up as—as you ordered and I saw him lying there stark and cold and dead! I know it. What magic restored his life, Dr. Black?"

The doctor smiled. "Of course he was not dead. It was a sort of crisis. But he will die. I don't understand that rally, but I know the heart of the man. It won't do to depend upon. The next news we have will be of his death. If he hasn't altered his will you will be pretty well off. He has been a prudent, money-making man. Extraordinarily successful, just as his brother was uncommonly worthless. The gifts he has turned over to the widow don't hurt the estate. By the way, she is certainly a lovely woman."

Elsie assented indifferently. The coming into her life of this woman was meaning more and more as the days went by.

"Is she really ill?" Elsie asked.

"Well, no. She seems to have been strung up pretty high and this is a sort of reaction. She needs to be quiet, with no worry of any sort. Mrs. Sylvester has taken her under her rather angular wing and they will get on first rate. I'm always sorry to see a pretty woman buried in crape. There's so little sense in it. But it's one of their ways."

"And her—her husband—was hardly a man to be grieved after," Elsie said.

"Well, hardly, poor fellow! But I don't know. If Robert had the head, Allie had the heart. They were twins, you know. A clear, well-balanced head is worth a great deal, but so is a tender, loving heart. Then, Robert had more than his share of will and of course Allie was left poverty stricken in this admirable quality. A woman loves to be loved, and I should think it means a good deal to have such a love as Allie—poor devil!—was able to give drop suddenly out of one's life. And she is alone."

Elsie laughed. "I've never thought of Dr. Black and sentiment at the same time. The pretty widow has gone to your head."

"To my heart, Miss Elsie," with a gallant bow. "I'm going to bring Margaret to see her. True, my wife hasn't lost her husband yet, but, setting a pretty high value upon him, she has much sympathy for less fortunate women. Margaret doesn't get out often, as you know. But she'll come to see Mrs. Graves."

Elsie watched the doctor as he drove away. There had come a singular grayness over the life at Riverbluff. The days were empty, the nights full of uneasy fancies and fears.

With the news of the death of Albert Graves had come another change at Riverbluff. Dick Mallard had gone away to be absent for many months. He had talked vaguely of studying Canada snow storms, the evasive colors of the wondrous northern sky, of work and half-formed plans that were to be executed before he returned. A new energy possessed him.

With the going of the artist the sunshine had passed for Elsie. And with much time for retrospection, now that the house was very quiet in respect to the dishonored dead, she began to wonder what the coming of Dick Mallard might mean, when by and by he should have finished his work in the North.

In Elsie's heart there grew an unreasoning hatred for the woman in her darkened chamber. If her stepfather had died that night; if the awful thing that came upon him had only been death! Once she had been wildly glad that this had not been so, that her criminal waiting down in the library while the clock ticked on far past the appointed time, had been overruled by a merciful Providence so that she had not been a murderer, a wretch guilty of a passive crime.

But now she was looking at it from a different standpoint. Her little hands clinched themselves. Was she to lose everything? Was this woman with her slow, unhurried grace, her low, thrilling voice, her fascinating personality, to win it all? Fortune, lover, all!

With thinking so much of all this, the picture of the dim old bedchamber and the ghastly face she had seen on the lace-edged pillow, came to her again and again, more vividly, more terribly real. With startling distinctness she saw it all; her fingers felt again the paralyzing tingle of the icy hand upon which she had laid them. It was death, death!

Nothing that had come later had any power to disprove the truth. The man had lived, she had talked with him, touched him, seen him again and again. Yet he had been dead—dead as a stone. Dead, and his will made her his sole heiress. What trick had fate played her?

The green glint became a part of the color of her lovely eyes. A new expression hardened the pink and white beauty of her face. A desire to see the room, to stand at the bedside, came upon her. But the chamber was locked. The master of Riverbluff had willed it so. The door must not be opened. He had carried the key away with him. Perhaps the new will was there. If it was and she could get it and the old malady——

She put the thought away, but it came back. It came and went so often as the months passed that it wore her face and her voice sharp and thin. Dr. Black looked anxiously at her when he dropped in after his neighborly fashion.

"It's lack of young company," Mrs. Black said in her motherly way. "It's not any of your medicine, Bob, that she's needing. It's the faces and voices of young people."

But there could be no gaiety at Riverbluff with the master away, and the master's brother newly dead, and the widow mourning, after her quiet fashion, in the house. So the color on Elsie's eyes paled, and people who saw her at church and down in the village began to say that after all her pretty freshness, Elsie Cameron was fading early.

Winter in the Southern mountains is a gloomy season, always. One decides that the sunny South is a misnomer, and even the hope of returning spring dies in the heart that longs for change.

Elsie went to Savannah for a bit of a visit, but the horrible fascinations of the closed chamber drew her early home. She passed the door many times each day. Then she began to linger there while the gruesome picture formed itself in her mind. After a time she knelt and looked through the empty keyhole.

Summer came again and with it a lightening of the widow's mourning. She was downstairs now, and about the grounds in soft, dull, thin dresses. She drove about the country, doing some sketching now and then. Elsie was rarely her companion. They seemed to find little pleasure in each other's society.

Autumn came again, and again Elsie went away, to return at midwinter even more restless. It had been many weeks since any word had come from the master. He had interested himself in fruit growing in California.

But this silence! What might not have happened? Even John Quill became anxious, driving out through the ceaseless rain to see if letters had reached Riverbluff.

The winter deepened, spring covered the mountains with arbutus, summer heaped drifts of pink laurel in the crevices and along the bluffs. Still no letter came from Mr. Graves, and no trace of him could be found.

Elsie watched feverishly. He might be dead. This rich man who had loved her gentle, yielding little mother might be dead. If they found it out some time and if there should be discovered no new will then—ah! then there should be a change at Riverbluff.

People said the girl was growing older. Two years were gone now and people began to be about the old place again. There were little informal teas and old-fashioned gatherings of a few friends to the mid-day dinner, and a bit of music in the old parlor, sometimes, at night, with Venus bringing in dainty cake and home-made scuppernong wine. Mrs. Graves liked this easy, Southern hospitality and she was growing popular and went down on Sundays to sing in the ivy-covered church across the river. She looked at home and in proper place among the people.

Elsie peeped oftener through the keyhole of the closed chamber. At length one day, when many members of the household were away, she brought Mrs. Sylvester's keys and patiently tried one after another till the bunch was exhausted. Then she went about looking for keys in the debris that gathers in a very old house. Patiently she brought all that she found to the empty keyhole. And at last, when despair seemed ready to claim her, she found one that fitted, that turned in the lock!

She turned the knob. The door creaked protestingly, but it opened and she entered the chamber, shutting herself in.

Except for the covering of dust it was almost unchanged. The great, curtained bed with the mirror at the head stood in its place. Birds fluttered between the closed blinds and the glass of the windows, where on the broad ledges they had nested for two seasons. The sound and the nearness of the dusky little wings were gruesome.

"If I can find some clew to the mystery, some trace of the new will, I shall not mind the creeping of the flesh on my bones, nor the horror that freezes my blood," the girl whispered.

A strange, tomblike chill was in the chamber whose windows had been so long closed against sun and air.

The girl looked everywhere, moving silently and quickly from place to place. Little had been moved when Mr. Graves changed his room, but nowhere was there anything to reward her diligent search.

The locked door of one of the closets attracted her attention. What she sought must be here. From John Quill's manner toward her she felt sure that he was not in possession of any new will. If one existed it must be here in the locked closet.

Another search discovered a key that by great effort moved the bolt. With an iron rod through the loop of the key she pried the bolt back, and fell back frightened.

The door was open. A close, earthy odor sickened her as she stepped into the closet and looked about the narrow space. There were half-worn clothes hanging about. She recognized the threadbare coats. They were mildewed and moth-eaten now.

There was a crack in the floor with a bit of paper wedged in it. Reduced to a full appreciation of the day of small things, Elsie picked at the paper with a hairpin till it was loosened. She sat down in the dust to read it.

The pretty color had gone from her sharpened face, and the childish blue from her eyes. Her lips were thinner and straighter.

The paper was only a page of an old letter, a letter writen in a woman's delicate chirography. It began abruptly:

"——and my throat is worse. I fear it will not bring us a living much longer. It ached so when I sang the night after the child died. But I had to. Something must be done. My burden is too heavy. Don't come till you can bring with you help of some sort. You understand the situation. Love is a great deal, but true love cherishes and shelters its object."

That was all. There was writing on only one side of the paper and no name anywhere. Where had she seen writing like this?

If she could find the rest of the letter she might at least discover some hidden secret of her stepfather's life.

So she began a search in the musty corners of the closet. Intent upon her work, she followed the crack in the floor with the hairpin. Presently she stood up. That was no ordinary joining of innocent planks with the one object of making a floor. It must be a door of some sort—a trapdoor leading to a place that she had never heard of.

A keen curiosity added itself to her morbid longing. She must open the door. When this was accomplished she fell back half stifled by the horrible odor that puffed out into the closet.

But there were narrow, ladder-like steps leading down into the dark. She must know what was there. This might be a hiding place for private papers as well as for secrets.

She crept away and brought a lantern with a bit of candle lighted in it. Then slowly, carefully she went down with the little globe of light about the lantern growing brighter as the darkness deepened. Holding her scarlet dressing away from the dust and carefully placing her slippered feet, she went on.

At the foot, the globe of light spread itself out and took into its embrace the most ghastly sight that the girl's horrified eyes had ever fallen upon—a human body, long dead, huddled in a corner.

With a shriek she flew back up the steps, not stopping to snatch the tiny slipper as the sharp edge of the ladder-like steps scraped it off. Panting and wild-eyed, she sprang into the room.

"Oh, what is it? Who is it?" she cried, seeking wildly for her handkerchief to wipe the horrible dust from her face. It was gone. When she crawled back to close the trapdoor she saw it on the steps, far down, a fleck of white in the awful darkness.

Closing the doors behind her she ran to her room. What should she do? Should she tell this horrible secret, or leave others to find it out as she had done?

If she told it people would be asking why she had forced doors to open that were locked against intrusion. She would keep her discovery a secret. For her own sake she must do that. But whose body was it, lying unburied in that dark place?

Wild stories that she had heard of robberies and murders came to her. She undressed and went tumbling to bed. It was here that Mrs. Sylvester found her when she came from the meeting of the sewing society.

Doctor Black looked at her through his big, bright glasses and prescribed his best remedies.

Mrs. Graves came in her soft, dusky gown, with the quiet, happy smile that won its way to all hearts except Elsie's.

"You'll be glad to know, Elsie, that we are to have Mr. Mallard with us again. He has set up a studio down in the village and, as we know him for a lazy worker, he will doubtless spend much time in his old home, though he has rooms in the village," Mrs. Graves said when Elsie had been ill a week.

"It's Dick's way not to let anybody know," Elsie said, a glad light in her eyes.

"Yes, I saw him today. He is going to paint some interiors—quaint things, you know, and he asked if we'd mind being bothered with his litter of easels and pallettes around here. I was sure we'd like it, and so I told him that. Only he must wait until you are well, to begin."

"I shall be well now that Dick has come," the girl said gladly, and the elder woman looked down at the delicate face with grave eyes.

Elsie recovered rapidly. The doctor's fear of nervous prostration went to the winds.

"How exquisitely pretty you are, Elsie! When did you get rid of your apple cheeks and cherub chin?" Mr. Mallard laughed as he held Elsie's hands.

"I have been afraid that you might think me faded and thin——"

"Not a bit of it. I tell you, Hellen, I have that picture now. Think of Elsie seated at her spinning wheel in that old room at the head of the stairs where Jasper Graves——"

"Why, Elsie, child!" Mrs. Graves put her arms about the girl, who had turned faint and white.

"You don't like to think of the long sittings. Well, never mind," Mr. Mallard said gently.

"It isn't that. The room is—is closed," Elsie panted.

"Oh, no, it isn't. I was there this morning. The key is in the door. The place is full of picturesque furniture and odd corners. I have planned an artistic grouping. You see, my mood for working is holding out this time. I am really accomplishing things." He was looking now at Mrs. Graves and his eyes were shining.

"I think Elsie was hardly strong enough to come down. She is tired. When she is well, I am sure she will be glad to give you the sittings. Have I seen this particular room, Elsie?"

Mrs. Graves, with her arm still about the girl, smiled down into the white face.

"No. It was my stepfather's. He moved before you came. He had been so ill there. I never liked the place," Elsie said slowly.

"I've always admired it. The great arched fireplace, the quaint cupboards and closets and old, old furniture are charming. It is in the oldest wing and there are all sorts of stories about it, Hellen. The negroes tell of ghosts that have walked there and of many deeds of cruelty that the old walls have hidden from the world. Altogether, it is a charming corner, and while the cat, who is Mr. Robert Graves, is away, we who are the mice will play and work in the old chamber.

When Mrs. Sylvester heard of this she was amazed. The chamber was locked. She had always believed it to be locked.

"But the key, my dear Mrs. Sylvester, proves that you are wrong. As you say, there was but one key. The master left it here in the door. A chamber whose door has a key on the outside is not considered hopelessly closed. So none of us will find any reason for objecting to Mr. Mallard's plan. He will use the chamber if he desires to do so."

And before Mrs. Graves the old housekeeper was dumb. "Orders are orders," she said when she went back to her linen basket. "I'm not responsible with a mistress in the house."

CHAPTER VI.

The first snow was falling when a man with heavy gray whiskers showing between cap rim and coat collar got off the train at the little station of Riverbluff down at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains. He was a man with strong, broad shoulders and, in spite of the great enveloping coat, a certain grace of movement.

Strangers came rarely to Riverbluff, and the keeper of the single hotel pounced upon this one feeling that he had found legitimate prey.

"Yes, I'll go with you," the man said, and there was a queer little ring in his voice. "I want a west room—one that commands a view of the old Riverbluff mansion."

"You know the place?"

"I've heard of it."

"Artist, I reckon?"

"I have painted."

The fat little landlord longed to see the name on the register. He put on his glasses and brought the extra lamp from the office table. But what he saw was only "John Smith." He put John Smith into a west room that looked out upon the snow-white beauty of the pillared mansion on the shoulder of the great hill.

And John Smith spent the night before the window looking at the lights that twinkled and then went out in the windows of the mansion, and at the moonlight that came in time to save the picture from the hunger of the darkness.

In the morning the snow glistened in the sunshine, and John Smith went down to his early breakfast. A sleigh flashed by and he saw through the window two faces.

"Fine team," Mr. Scroggins said, seeing the interest in the dark eyes of the stranger.

"Yes. Who owns them?"

"Robert Graves. He owns the place you wanted to see from your window."

"Was—was that he?"

"No. That's Mallard, an artist. The lady is Mrs. Albert Graves. She's a widow. They say she's going to marry Mallard. She lives up there. Clever woman as ever I see. She sings at our church. She's brought things out mightily, I tell you. But she's not out often now. It's just for her health that she's drivin' out today, poor lady."

John Smith turned with a question, but Mr. Scroggins had trotted off for a talk with his butcher.

After breakfast Mr. Smith wandered out about the old town. There were knots of people at sunny corners, talking earnestly. The old courthouse bell rang complainingly at half-past nine. Drifting with the crowd he entered the dingy hall.

"I don't know how she's goin' to come out. Some think a jury can't be got; the case is so clear against her," said a lank mountaineer, gnawing at a plug of tobacco.

"Don't b'lieve in circumstantial evidence," said another, spitting tobacco juice between his yellow teeth.

"Best sort," said an old man who puffed contentedly at a black clay pipe.

"But that little yaller-haired gal! Fine as a fiddle and proud as a young filly. She's been to my house when Lucy was sick. 'Peared mighty kind and tender like," said the first speaker, reflectively.

"Hit's a mighty clare case," said the old man. "That little red slipper and that white hankercher with her name on it tell an ugly tale. He muster come home some night an' she got holt of him. Nobody, not even Doctor Bob Black, can tell how long the body 'd been there. Then she's been failin' so. Just nachelly gone to sticks."

John Smith joined the group.

"Murder case?" he asked.

"Man alive! where you been? Ain't you heard that Robert Graves was murdered in his own house by his stepdaughter, Elsie Cameron? The papers are full of hit."

"I haven't been in this part of the country," John Smith said, moving away.

Every day the bearded man sat in the courthouse. People said he was a novelist searching in criminal courts for a fresh plot. His face grew white as the time for the trial approached. Mr. Scroggins noticed that he ate nothing. Mrs. Scroggins listened when she was up with the baby and reported to her husband that the bear-like stranger had walked the floor all night.

The trial of Elsie Cameron began. The earth had been searched for a clew to the whereabouts of Robert Graves. A quiet nook in the Rocky Mountains where a man was laid up with typhoid fever escaped the investigating eye of the excited public. And so it had happened that without knowledge of the tragedy, this man had come to Riverbluff.

The world had made up its mind. The shapeless mass that had been found in the small, secret wine cellar, when Dick Mallard in his search for quaint costumes had discovered and opened the trapdoor, was the body of Robert Graves. There were locks of hair, there was a threadbare suit of clothes. He had often worn threadbare clothing. The pockets had been found empty except for a few pieces of silver and a scrap or two of writing that nobody could make sense of, since parts were gone and pages torn across.

In what way the murder had been done no one could say. There were many theories. When it came to the question of who had committed the murder, there was one opinion. Mr. Graves had long ago made a will leaving his wealth to his dead wife's only child, Elsie Cameron.

His heart had softened toward his scapegrace brother, and Elsie heard of the contemplated change in the will. Then the vagabond had died and Robert Graves had taken a brother's place to the widow. He had doubtless returned to his home after his eccentric fashion, told his plans to Elsie who had found means to end his life, saving the large estate for herself.

Very white and frail Elsie looked as she sat between Mrs. Sylvester and Mrs. Black. It was the third day when another woman sat with them. She was tall, dressed in black and heavily veiled. But there was no mistaking the splendid shoulders and the graceful poise of the head.

The whiskered stranger's eyes dwelt upon the veiled lady. He waited hungrily for a sight of her face. She came and went with Dick Mallard and people spoke of them as they passed.

Dr. Black kept as near as possible to Elsie. He talked whenever there was a listening ear of Robert Graves' incurable malady. Of how easily he might have come home and found easy his way to the old chamber, of how naturally he might have gone to his private cellar for wine and died there.

But there were the little red kid slipper, the lace edge handkerchief, the door locked with the key on the outside, and the closed trapdoor, against his charitable theory.

Elsie told her story in a faint little voice and the stranger listened.

"It's hard not to believe the child," an old man said as the stranger passed him going out. "The case is goin' agin her."

It was the next day that Mr. Scroggins, lounging about the station, watched the newly-arrived train.

"One passenger, and there's that west room that the stranger left last night," he said, trotting briskly forward. But the traveler walked rapidly down the street.

"Where have I seen the swing of that tall figure?" asked the postmaster, looking up from his thin leather bag.

"Them high fur collars is same as a disguise," complained the discomforted landlord.

The tall figure marched through the old town and went swiftly across the courthouse lawn. The cracked old bell had rung an hour ago.

Calmly, deliberately the tall figure, hatless now and with fur collar turned down, walked up the aisle. Every eye was fastened upon him as he came into view and followed him as he stopped before the Judge.

"What does this mean?" he asked calmly.

"Robert Graves! It is Robert Graves himself!" Dr. Black exclaimed, forgetting decorum in his eagerness and surprise.

For a space confusion reigned in the courthouse, and then from a rear door, with his stepdaughter on his arm, and followed by Mrs. Graves and Mrs. Sylvester, Mr. Graves left the house and entered the carriage that had brought the Riverbluff people over.

Almost in silence they were driven home, Elsie half fainting from excitement.

"Oh, sir," Mrs. Sylvester wailed, when she found herself alone with her master, "we were so sure that you were dead! It was all the fault of your leaving the keys in the doors."

"Keys?"

"The door was not locked. It's no wonder there were ghosts and uncanny spells with that awful thing in the cellar!"

"I want to hear all about that. Send Mallard and Black and John Quill to me as soon as they arrive. Look after Elsie."

And Mr. Graves went into the library and closed the door.

He stood before the fire and looked at a picture hung over the chimney piece.

"Retribution! How little they know that she meant to be guilty! Poor child! And Hellen, my Hellen! To be under the same roof with her again! Mallard—— Yes, she shall choose. Hellen shall have another chance. She shall choose. How my nerves tingled when she touched my hand! But her eyes, her lovely eyes, were calm. There was in them only a great relief. She was thinking of Elsie.

"Is a man, then, only a name? What is the charm of personality? With my brother's name I am to her my brother. But she shall make choice."

And then the door opened and three gentlemen entered to find their host staring at his own portrait.

There was much talk, as the four sat together with wine and cigars, of the gruesome thing that had been found in the deep old wine cellar.

They went after a time to the place and climbed down and up the slender steps. Then they returned to the library and the doctor told some wonderful stories of the strange preservation of bodies buried for many years. When court adjourned the judge drove out with the mayor and the group in the library grew.

It was decided at length that the body might have been in the cellar many years.

"Perhaps it was one of your uncle's secrets, Mr. Graves," John Quill suggested.

The quiet old countryside was stirred with a genuine sensation. Mr. Robert Graves, fresh from the great new West, would have been an object of interest in any case, but coming as he did from the realms of the dead, coming at such an opportune time and sending to the winds a carefully built castle of evidence, he was a hero to be wined and dined and made much of everywhere.

People said that the West had done him good. He was broader, kinder, more generous and better to know.

"I think we'll have to send Elsie to your fountain or health and youth, Robert. I don't like that shadowy look she has. I was mistaken about you, but I'm afraid that I can't hope to be mistaken in this case. She is very frail. And I think I know a secret. She cares for Dick Mallard," Doctor Black said.

"Well?" questioned Mr. Graves.

"Well, if you've an eye in your head you can see how it is with Mallard. And who can blame him? Your sister-in-law is a most fascinating woman. The countryside is on its knees to her."

"You think my—my sister is in love with Mallard?" Mr. Graves loosened his collar. The doctor noticed that his face paled.

"Well, yes. He is the sort of man women care for. And they were old friends, you know. I've picked that up. Fancy he has always loved her. You know Allie's way—poor fellow!—how he used to carry everything before him for a time, only to let it all fall through when he was tired. I dare say the vehemence of his love took her off her feet. He was a handsome fellow, handsomer than you, Robert, like as you two were. Yes, I think she loves Mallard. One sort of feels it. But Elsie—could you get her away?"

"I think of going soon—I shall take her if I go—send her if—— but I dare say I shall go." He laughed, and the doctor looked sharply at him.

"The West has made you more like Allie," he said.

"Heaven forbid!" Mr. Graves said slowly.

"I've seen worse men than the poor lad was," the doctor said as he closed the door, and Mr. Graves smiled up at the picture above the mantel.

Walking up and down the room he heard a light step in the hall, and raised his head to listen. Ah! she was coming here. He might feast his hungry eyes upon her beauty for a little while!

He stepped behind the curtain of the deep bay window and sat down on the window seat. He smiled when he remembered that first night of his home-coming.

The door opened and Hellen Graves came in. Ah! how lovely she was in the soft black gown with its outlining of snow-white fur. The faint perfume of jessamine flowers came from her garments as she moved. The soft swish of her silken skirts was like music. His heart beat fast. Perhaps he should find courage to go and kneel on the floor beside her and beg her to accept all that was his to give.

Surely the old love would stir itself in her heart, and, without knowing why, she would give herself to him.

A little smile lay about her lips and her white hands were folded softly in her lap as she sat before the fire. It was so good to see her here in his old home with the anxious look gone from her face.

Then the door opened again and Dick Mallard entered, big and fair and yellow-haired, his merry blue eyes shining.

"Ah! I was hoping to find you like this. How comfortable you look! Pretty cold outside."

He dropped down on the rug at her feet and looked up in that absurdly boyish way of his.

Her cheeks had flushed. She looked steadily into the fire.

"Hellen," he said with a low thrill in his voice, "I don't think I can wait any longer. May I tell you now?"

"Is it something that won't keep?" she smiled.

"It is something that has kept since the first day I saw you, that will keep as long as I live. May I tell you, Hellen?"

"Suppose I already know?" Her voice was very low, but the man behind those fateful curtains heard the gladness in it, and for a time he was as one suddenly turned to stone.

At length he heard again and she was saying:

"The past with its mistakes is gone, Dick. Let us forget it. I've rested from the weariness of it here in this quiet spot, and now when you will I am ready to go with you where you will, for my love for you has 'kept' in spite of it all." She smiled as only she could smile and held out her hands, and the man behind the curtains closed his eyes.

"I don't think the place agrees with the master," Mrs. Sylvester said when she met Mr. Graves coming out of the library an hour later. "He looks old and sick again, already."

And Mrs. Graves, coming down the stair with a round fur cap on her dark hair and a scarlet scarf twisted about her throat, turned to look at the man slowly crossing the hall.

The front doors were open and there was a glimpse of Mallard in a fur-heaped sleigh.

From a window Mr. Graves watched them as with jingling bells they flashed across the bridge.

"She has chosen," he said. "Venus," he called, as a turbaned head showed from a doorway, "tell Miss Cameron to have her trunks packed today. She and I are going away. It is the doctor's orders. Can you go?"

"Yes, Marse Robert."

"It's not going to be for long, Robert. She's not going to get strong. Be good to her," the doctor said when he heard of the new plan.

"It's so good of you—father. May I call you that now? I want to tell you that I'm sorry I didn't love you—when my mother did. I was younger and had not suffered. I love you dearly now. And shall I call you father?"

"If you will. Thank you, child." And in the early morning the others watched as the grim, dark man and the frail, pale girl went away together from sorrow that was too grievous to bear.

John Quill passed them on the bridge; the black box was in his hand.

"The papers are all ready, Mr. Graves. I expected to get there before your early start," he said.

"I thought I'd get to the office in time." Mr. Graves stepped out of the carriage.

John Quill opened the box and took out a heavy, folded paper. "This is it," he said, "and here is a pen and ink."

Mr. Graves spread the paper on the stone railing. The dead moonflower vines rustled in the cold wind, making a weird sound. There was ice at the edges of the river. Christmas ferns shone green among the dead leaves.

Mr. Graves held the pen above the paper. He had forgotten Elsie and John Quill. The horses grew impatient. Still the man stood there, his eyes on the great white mansion on the terraced-mountain side. The ink dried on the pen. When at length it touched the paper there was no mark. John Quill held the inkstand nearer. Mr. Graves threw back his head and signed the paper, forming each letter with studied care. Then he handed it to John Quill.

"A handsome wedding present, Mr. Graves," the lawyer said. "There's not another such a place as Riverbluff in all the land. I call it a generous gift."

The girl in the carriage leaned back and closed her eyes. John Quill drew on his glove.

"Give Mrs. Graves the paper with my love. I shall never see you again, John Quill. Good-by."

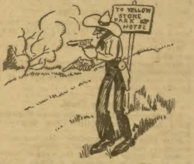
The lawyer slipped upward toward the mansion, and the carriage swept out of sight.

Half an hour later a woman stood at a window of the mansion with a heavy, folded paper in her hand. Her beautiful dark eyes followed a train of cars that crept like a huge worm around the foot of the hill across the river.

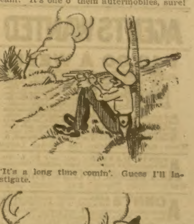
"Poor Allie! I wonder if he knows that his wish has come true and I am mistress of Riverbluff?" she said.

The End.

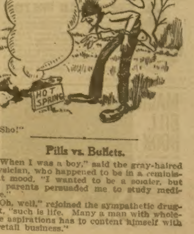
Spoiled Sport.


TO YELLOW STONE PARK HOTEL

Bad Bob—Ha! A queer smell an' lots o' steam! It's one o' them autermobiles, sure!



"It's a long time comin'. Guess I'll investigate.

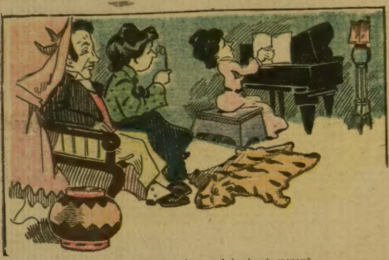


"Sho!"

Pills vs. Bullets.

"When I was a boy," said the gray-haired physician, who happened to be in a reminiscent mood, "I wanted to be a soldier, but my parents persuaded me to study medicine."

"Oh, well," rejoined the sympathetic druggist, "such is life. Many a man with wholesale aspirations has to content himself with a retail business."



Mrs. Askem—Does your daughter's voice ever bring her in money?
Squirmly—Oh, yes. She's always howling for money for new clothes.

The Third Division.

A Southern planter employed a negro to work some of his land during the last year on shares. On account of the high price of cotton the negro's half of the proceeds amounted to $1,500. The planter knew that it would ruin any Afro-American to get such a sum of money, and decided that half of it would be enough. Upon further reflection the conviction grew upon him that $800 would ruin any negro in the world, so he cut the sum in half again, and, piling four hundred shining silver dollars on his desk, sent for the negro and brother and said that he was ready to settle. The man came in and fairly gasped at the amount of wealth in sight.

"Fo' Gawd, boss," he said, "is dat money all ours?"

"Yes."

"Well, den, divide it in two piles, and you take youah half and I'll take mine."

Hard Luck.

Biddy Malone was in a great fever of excitement when she landed in America direct from the old country. Her certificate of character had been lost on shipboard, and what could she do? To her great happiness and consolation, Tim Mulligan volunteered and wrote a beautiful recommendation as follows:

"This is to certify that Biddy Malone had a good character before she left the old country, but lost it on shipboard coming over."

May Come to This.

Mrs. Upperfloor—I suppose you have heard the latest order the janitor has promulgated?

Mrs. Firststory—About dolls? Yes, wonder why?

Mrs. Upperfloor—He says some of the dolls the neighbors' children leave here look so much like children that they are apt to give the hotel a bad name.

Soiled by Trade.

Mrs. Wayupp—Don't invite those Highupp girls again. Their father has disgraced himself.

Miss Wayupp—Impossible! He is a noted scientist, and president of a college.

Mrs. Wayupp—Yes, but the vulgar fellow has recently been making a study of the trade winds. It's in all the papers, too.

AGENTS WANTED

$40.00 A WEEK.

Reliable man or woman each county as manager to exhibit, take orders, appoint agents for Harrison Valveless Oil-Gas Stoves. Wonderful invention—beats others—Automatically generates fuel gas from kerosene—Miniature gas works—Absolutely safe—Enormous demand—Splendid for summer cooking—Delight customers—Cheap, clean, safe fuel. Gasoline is dangerous. Catalogue Free. Write today. World Mfg. Co., 5687 World B'ld'g, Cincinnati, O.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

AGENTS WANTED! Sell our $1 bottle Sarsaparilla for 35c; best seller; 200 per cent profit; write to-day for terms and territory. F. R. GREENE, 115 Lake St., CHICAGO

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

AGENTS $500 per Month made by selling Stransky's patent for making smokeless gunpowder at 10c. per pound. Particulars free. J. A. STRANSKY, Box 206, PUKWANA, S. D.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

FREE GOLD WATCH

This watch has American movement fully warranted to keep correct time. The case is Solid Gold Plated, equal in appearance to a Gold Filled Watch warranted 20 years. We give it FREE to Boys and Girls or anyone for selling 20 pieces of our handsome jewelry at 10c each. Send your address and we will send the jewelry postpaid, when sold send us the $2 and we will positively send you the watch and chain.

ERIE MFG. CO., Dept. 57 Chicago

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

MAGIC BILL BOOK!

An entertaining and useful article. Can be used as any ordinary pocket book. Sample by mail 15c. AGENTS WANTED.

W. C. WATKINS & CO., Box 1505, Pittsburg Pa

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

Anything to Please.

The wealthy lady came for the portrait of her husband. The artist handed over the picture with a mysterious bundle attached.

"What is this?" asked the patron.

"A phonograph, madam," responded the artist.

"And what is that for?"

"Well, you said you wanted a 'speaking likeness.' That's the best I can do."

The True Horseman.

Hostler—T' hear them society dudes talk, yeh might think they knowed something about horses.

Stable Boy—They own plenty.

Hostler—Yes, an' they got cheated out o' their eyes on every one of 'em.

The Atlantic Express With New York Sleeping Cars Leaves Chicago every afternoon at 3:00 o'clock via Pensylvania Short Lines, the shortest route to the East, taking passengers through to New York without changing cars. Pullman parlor cars and Pennsylvania dining cars; all-vestibuled coaches with head-rest seats and every detail for comfort and luxury. Daylight run over the Alleghany Mountains. Ask C. L. Kimball, A. G. P. Agt., No. 2 Sherman street, Chicago, for full information.

The Toper's Comment.

"This is a dilution and a snare," remarked the man with the impressionistic complexion, as he realized that his whisky had been watered.

The Rosebud Reservation

lands are open in July. Full particulars as to date of registration, drawings and final entry, and as to character of soil and climate, requirements of the U. S. homestead laws, maps, etc., are contained in a pamphlet "New Homes in the West" issued by the Passenger Department, Chicago & North-Western Ry. Send 2 cent stamp for copy or call on any ticket agent The North-Western Line. W. B. Kniskern, 22 Fifth Avenue, Chicago, Ills.

A Truth Worth Knowing.

What is done cannot be undone, especially if it is a hard-boiled egg.

Fatal Oversight.

"Young Watkins and his bride have already quarreled," remarked the society reporter, "although they have only been married two weeks."

"What's the trouble?" asked the sporting editor.

"It seems," explained the pencil shover, "that the wedding presents were at the bottom of it. He wanted to take two or three of them to his office and she objected."

"Serves 'em right," growled the sporting editor. "They should have signed an agreement as to the division of the gate receipts before the match was pulled off."

Higher Education.

Silas—So you sent your two daughters to different colleges?

Cyrus—Yeas. I sent Mabel to a college that had a cooking school attached an' I sent Molly to one that was famous for its gymnasium. When Mabel comes home on vacation she can go in the kitchen an' Molly can turn the grindstone an' beat the carpets.

Water Cure.

"Among other things," remarked the temperance man, "I consider water a good sleep-producer.

"And so do I," replied the suburbanite. "I empty a pitcher each evening before retiring and then I can sleep like a top."

"And you really drink a pitcher of water?"

"No; I empty it on the dog that howls under my window."

Ladies, Preserve Your Youthful Appearance.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the fact and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

He Wasn't Dangerous.

"Yes," said the pretty girl, "ma is awfully particular about the young men who call on me."

"But she doesn't object to me, I hope?" remarked the youth who was holding a chair down in the parlor.

"Oh, no," answered the fair one. "Ma says you are one of those harmless creatures that it isn't necessary to muzzle."

Practical Pointer.

"I think," said the manufacturer, "it would be a good idea to advertise this new brand of soap as being absolutely pure."

"Don't do it, dad," protested his son, who had recently graduated from a school where advertising is taught while you wait. "Make it 98 per cent and the women will snap it up for a bargain."

Not Easily Done.

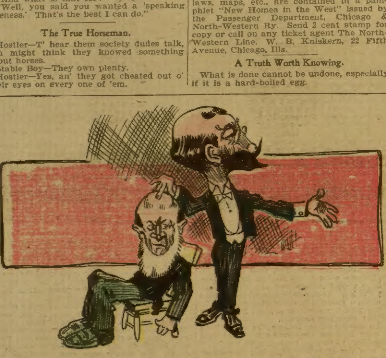
Housekeeper (captiously)—I believe that condensed milk of yours is mostly water.

Manufacturer (quietly)—Madam, have you ever tried to condense water?

The Modern Homebody.

He—And are you willing to become the wife of a poor man?

She—Oh, yes; I am truly domestic in my tastes. I belong to only nine clubs.



"Ah, my good man," said the phrenologist, "I must congratulate you upon possessing the largest bump of generosity it has ever been my pleasure to examine."

"Might as well spare your breath, professor," interrupted the wife of the good man, who was enjoying the lecture from the front seat. "That there bump is the record of my feelings as expressed with a flatiron because he wouldn't give me money enough to buy a new dress, after I've worn this here brown satin ten years hand-runnin'."

One fo Many.

Frog Hollow Citizen—How is your son doin' in th' city?

Bungtown Man—Fust-rate. He gits two dollars a day as motorman on the Steenth street line and makes five more a week as New York society correspondent of the Bungtown Bugle.

Nearing the Limit.

Mrs. Neighbors—I understand your husband is getting to be quite absent-minded.

Mrs. Rounder—Yes, indeed. Why, only last night he actually forgot to go downtown.

Penalty of Fame.

"Why did you tell Gunner you were a Russian sympathizer?"

"He offered me a cigar called 'Admiral Togo.'"

"But Admiral Togo is a hero."

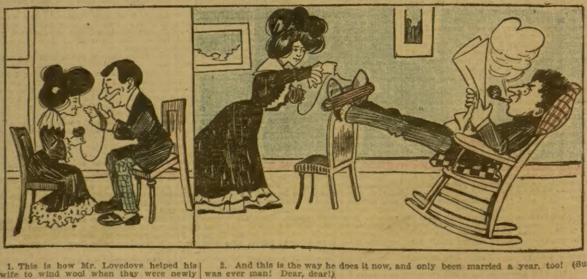
"Yes, and the man that smoked the cigar would be a hero, too."

Between Friends.

Ida—So Ernestine married that young man after giving him the shake three times?

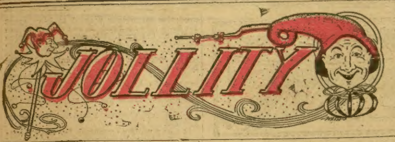
May—Yes, indeed. She believes in treating young men and medicine the same way—"shake well before taking."

SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT.



1. This is how Mr. Lovedove helped his wife to wind wool when they were newly married.

2. And this is the way he does it now, and only been married a year, too! (Such was ever man! Dear, dear!)



WISE WORDS

A Physician on Food.

A physician of Portland, Oregon, has views about food. He says:

"I have always believed that the duty of the physician does not cease with treating the sick, but that we owe it to humanity to teach them how to protect their health especially by hygienic and dietetic laws.

"With such a feeling as to my duty I take great pleasure in saying to the public that in my own experience and also from personal observation I have found no food to equal Grape-Nuts and that I find there is no limit to the great benefit this food will bring when used in all cases of sickness and convalescence.

"It is my experience that no physical condition forbids the use of Grape-Nuts. To persons in health there is nothing so nourishing and acceptable to the stomach, especially at breakfast, to start the machinery of the human system on the day's work. In cases of indigestion I know that a complete breakfast can be made of Grape-Nuts and cream and I think it is necessary not to overload the stomach at the morning meal. I also know the great value of Grape-Nuts when the stomach is too weak to digest other food.

"This is written after an experience of more than 20 years treating all manner of chronic and acute diseases, and the letter is written voluntarily on my part without any request for it." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

There's a reason.

Look in each package for the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

An Unpardonable Offense.

Friend—Aren't you rather afraid of that handsome rival of yours?

Smartchap—Not a bit.

"He is very rich.

"Yes."

"A great favorite with the ladies."

"I know it."

"Yet you have no fear?"

"No. He guessed at her age once, and got her only two years younger than she is."

A Shocking Dream.

He—Do you know, I just had a nap at Mrs. Noveau-Riche's musicale and a terrible dream.

"What did you dream?"

"That I went again."

Usual Way.

A girl may favor unions, but
In time there comes an hour
When she's apt to be hard pressed
By a single one-man power.

Somewhat Different.

Askitt—What's Rymer's business?

Knowitt—Why, he's a magazine poet.

Askitt—Yes, I know that; but what does he do for a living?

An Insinuation.

"Say, maw," queried small Tommy Toddles, looking up from his picture book, "am I descended from monkeys?"

"Not on my side of the house, Thomas," replied Mrs. Toddles with much emphasis.

Heroic Treatment.

Mrs. Ebony—Doctah, my husban' he got the paralersis in the laigs, so he can't move his feet.

Doctor Dark—Is dat so, Mrs. Ebony? Well, I'll call right away.

Mrs. Ebony—Yes, doctah, an' be suah to brung youh banjo erlong. If dat doan' start his laigs goin', nuthin' will.

A Brainy Youth.

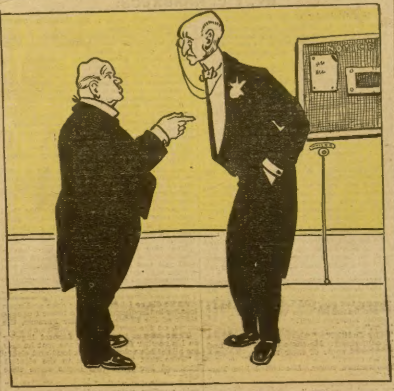
Mr. Richmann—I don't demand that my daughter shall marry wealth, but I do insist that the man she marries shall have brains enough to get along in the world.

Young Slimpurse—Well, I think I've shown pretty good judgment in selecting a father-in-law, don't you?

Found Out.

She—You're just like all the rest of the men. Here we've been married only a year, and you never kiss me unless I ask you to.

He—Huh! You're just like all the rest of the women. You never think to ask me to kiss you unless you want money.



"Hear about Grimsby, the druggist?"

"Who? That stingy fellow down at the corner? What about him? Has he stopped asking people to give him back the ends they pinch off of cigars?"

"Better'n that. His wife asked him to take her to the seaside."

"Did he?"

"Wait. He told her he couldn't afford the expense, but he would give her something just as good."

"And what did he do?"

"Filled her shoes with sand, took all her money away from her, and blistered her nose with a sun glass."

A Paradox.

What a language is ours, O, ye gods!
Its idioms oft are deceivin';
We speak of folks being at odds,
Whenever they strive to get even.

An Understanding.

She—You must remember that ours was a summer engagement.

He—That means, if you see any one you like better, you'll break it?

"Yes."

"And if I see any one I like better——"

"I'll sue you for breach of promise."

Rather Suspicious.

"I don't understand why the blood-and-thunder show didn't take," said the manager. "We even offered souvenirs."

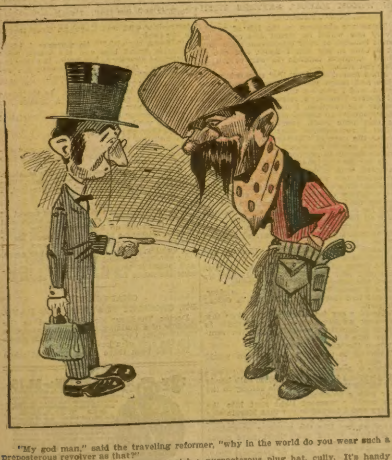
"Yes," drawled Amber Pete, "the ads said every one would receive a bullet, but it didn't say just where he'd receive it."

Lost Opportunity.

Jimjones—I met a ghost last night and it spoke to me.

Samsmith—What did it say?

Jimjones—Haven't the least idea. I'm not familiar with the dead languages.



"My god man," said the traveling reformer, "why in the world do you wear such a preposterous revolver as that?"

"Fer the same reason as you wear sich a purposterous plug hat, cully. It's handy to take up collections with."

AGENTS WANTED

WE SHIP ON APPROVAL without a cent deposit and allow 10 DAYS FREE TRIAL on every bicycle. Any wheel not satisfactory returned at our expense.
Highest Grade 1904 Models $8.75 to $17
Coaster Brakes, Hedgethorne puncture proof tires and best equipment.
1902 & 1903 Models Best Makes $7 to $12
500 Second-Hand Wheels
All makes & Models good as new $3 to $8
Great Factory Clearing Sale at half factory cost.
EARN A BICYCLE taking orders from sample wheel furnished by us. Our agents make large profits. Write at once for catalogues and our special offer.
AUTOMOBILES, TIRES, Sewing Machines, Sundries, etc., half usual prices.
MEAD CYCLE CO., Dept. 52D, Chicago
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

$35 A WEEK AND EXPENSES to men with rigs to introduce our Poultry Goods. JAVELLE MFG. CO., Dept. 29, Parsons, Kan
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

$35 PER WEEK AND ALL EXPENSES to man with rig to introduce our Poultry Goods; send stamp EUREKA MANF'G. CO., Dept U Navasota, Texas
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

STARK TREES best by Test—78 YEARS. We PAY CASH Weekly WANT MORE SALESMEN Stark Nursery, Louisiana, Mo.; Dansville, N. Y.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

DETECTIVE Shrewd, reliable man wanted in every locality. Act under orders; no experience necessary. For full particulars write American Detective Ass'n, Indianapolis, Ind.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

YOU CAN MAKE $3 TO $10 A DAY Fitting glasses for us. Big profits. Our 24-page FREE EYE BOOK tells how. Write for it today.
JACKSONIAN OPTICAL COLLEGE, Dept. 2102, JACKSON, MICH.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

WE WANT YOU
To represent us, and will pay Good Salaries to the right people. No capital or experience required. For particulars send two cent stamp to— CONSOLIDATED CHEMICAL CO., Indianapolis, Ind.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

COEY BICYCLE ATTACHMENT The only one you have a right to use on railroad tracks. Fits any bicycle in three minutes. Smooth road, high speed. Agents wanted. Send stamp for booklet. C. A. COEY & CO. 5340 Cottage Grove Avenue, CHICAGO
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

$3 a Day Sure Send us your address and we will show you how to make $3 a day absolutely sure; we furnish the work and teach you free, you work in the locality where you live. Send us your address and we will explain the business fully, remember we guarantee a clear profit of $3 for every day's work, absolutely sure. Write at once. ROYAL MANUFACTURING CO., Box 1101, Detroit, [illegible]
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

FREE GOLD WATCH! An American movement watch, fully warranted to keep correct time, in Solid Gold Plated case, equal in appearance to a Gold Filled Watch warranted 20 years, is given FREE to Boys and Girls or anyone for selling 20 pieces of our handsome jewelry at 10 cents each. Send us your address and we will send the jewelry postpaid, when sold send us the $2 and we will positively send you the watch and a chain. BOND JEWELRY CO., Dept. 24 CHICAGO.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

Agents Wanted
To take orders for our popular line of custom made clothing. No capital required. Big money made by good salesmen. One agent made $80 in four days. Write at once for outfit before best territory is taken. Address
The Warrington W. & W. Mills, Dept 4, Chicago
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

WANTED! MEN AND WOMEN; any age, easy work part or all of their time. If you are seeking a good legitimate business with the assistance and co-operation of a responsible house, you will do well to send us your name. We will show you how hundreds are making more money than they can earn in any other way. Experience not necessary; no goods to peddle, deliver or collect money for, and you positively assume no risk whatever. We offer you a permanent and big paying occupation at once. Write for particulars today. Address,
FRANKLIN WRIGHT & CO., Manufacturers and Distributors of high grade cigars, Dept. 1, 221 FIFTH AVENUE, CHICAGO
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

FREE! Beautiful Set of Genuine A 1 WM. A. ROGERS SILVER SPOONS GUARANTEED, WORTH $10.00 has never been given away for selling $2.40 worth of goods, but if you will send your name at once, we will send postpaid and TRUST YOU with 24 packages of fancy assorted hair pins which will sell at sight at 10c a package. When sold send the $2.40 and we will positively send free of charge six GENUINE WILLIAM A. ROGERS A1 SILVER PLATED SPOONS, GUARANTEED. MAC GREGOR SILVER CO. DEPT. 9 CHICAGO, ILL.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

BIG MAIL FREE!

POST OFFICE

Would you like to get a lot of letters, circulars and packages? You probably know that manufacturers supply houses, wholesalers and publishers buy names and addresses for the purpose of sending samples, advertising matter, papers and circulars to. Good names and addresses are hard to get and are quite expensive. We publish an Agents' Directory List containing names and addresses carefully arranged in alphabetical order. We send these Directory Lists to concerns we know are anxious for good names to send advertising matter to. Write your name very plainly so the printer will not make a mistake; be sure to give your street number and town also plainly written so that any mail addressed to you will reach you without fail. We have been publishing the Agents' Directory List for several years and refer to the editor of this paper who will tell you we are reliable. All we ask is that you send 10 cents in silver and we will enter your name in our Agents' Directory List as above stated. Write today. Address
AGENTS' DIRECTORY LIST,
INDIANA INDIANA COUNTY, PA.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

AFTER WE LEAVE.

Before Sim Sikes left Perkinstown
He used to run the "old burg" down.

But after he had moved away
He praised his native place, they say.

He liked the climate that it had,
Though once he'd thought that it was bad.

He bragged about the people there,
The "splendid men" and "women fair,"

Though once he had despised them all
And called them slow and cold and small.

We think the world's a poor old place
And call it hard names to its face,

But, like Sim Sikes, we may some day
Look back from far and far away,

And think more kindly of the sphere
We rail at so while we are here.

◆

NELLIE'S RUSE.

BY JENNIE W.

Nellie Nash had two lovers. One, Ernest Crauford, was a boarder at the only hotel in the little village, and was from the city. He had come early in the month of January, and although he had previously intended to return in February, he was still in Eastlake, for the reason that he had been attracted by Miss Nash's beauty, and the wealth of the prosperous Mr. Nash. But of course this reason was known only to himself.

The other lover, George Lyle, was only a clerk in a dry-goods store in Eastlake. He had been Nellie's favorite before the perfumed fop, Mr. Crauford, had come to the village; but now Nellie seemed to prefer the company of Mr. Crauford, or else he gave her no chance to be alone, or in the company of any one else.

Mrs. Nash, Nellie's mother, had a great aversion to the fashionable city exquisite, and did not hesitate to show him her dislike; and Mr. Crauford had a very decided aversion to Mrs. Nash.

"Nellie," said Mrs. Nash one day, "I wish you would tell Mr. Crauford to go back to the city. It is plain to see that he does not care for you, but for your father's money. If you do not tell him to go, I shall, the next time I see his pencil-like cane coming in the door."

"Oh, mother!" laughed Nell, "you are so cruel! I am sure that Ernest is as nice as he can be. He is much more courteous and thoughtful than any other gentleman of my acquaintance."

"Mr. Lyle is a true gentleman," said the mother; "and in my eyes there is a great difference between him and Mr. Crauford. You seem to have dropped his acquaintance entirely."

"Oh, no; I have not, indeed, mother. When I bought my new cashmere dress yesterday, I had quite a little chat with him. But tomorrow is the first day of April, and I am going to ascertain if what you said about Mr. Crauford is true."

Mrs. Nash looked up from her sewing in surprise. Nellie laughed gleefully and disappeared. In a few moments she returned, bringing with her pen, ink and paper. Then she sat down at the table and commenced to write.

"What are you doing, Nellie?" queried Mrs. Nash.

"You shall see presently," said Nellie.

In a few moments the letter was completed and Nellie tossed it into her mother's lap. Mrs. Nash read it through and then gave it to her daughter.

"I am afraid that it is not quite proper," said she, doubtfully.

"Yes, it is," said Nellie, placing the letter in an envelope.

Mrs. Nash repressed a smile.

"I see Kittie Warren passing by," said Nellie, "and I will ask her to take this to the office for me. Kittie," she called, "please mail this letter for me, and if you come up Saturday afternoon I will teach you that new crochet pattern."

The little girl promised, and Nellie went back into the house.

"What do you think he will do, mother?" she asked Mrs. Nash.

"He will return to the city," said Mrs. Nash.

Nellie smiled.

"I don't think so, mother," she replied.

But we will now make ourselves acquainted with the contents of the letter which Mr. Crauford received on All-Fools' day, while at his late breakfast. When the coffee was brought in by the servant, he gave Mr. Crauford the letter. Mr. Crauford glanced at the address.

"From Nellie," he said complacently. "By Jove! I had better propose pretty soon, or some other lucky dog will be wedding Mr. Nash's riches."

He leisurely opened the envelope, and, taking a sip of the fragrant coffee, began to peruse the note. In a little while a frown settled on his manly brow, and he pulled the ends of his mustache vigorously. Of course he did not remember that it was the first of April. The letter read as follows:

"SOLTHERN, March 31, 18—.—Mr. Crauford.—Dear Sir: We are wealthy no more. A sudden change has taken place in our circumstances, and I thought it best to inform you, although I well know that nothing could change you toward me. Mother is looking forward anxiously for a reply to this letter, and you can imagine poor father's feelings. NELLIE."

Mr. Crauford did imagine Mr. Nash's feelings.

"So the old lady will be anxiously waiting for a reply to the letter, will she?" he soliloquized. "Then she will wait in vain, for the next train which leaves Eastlake carries me and my earthly possessions to the city."

And Mr. Crauford spoke truly. He disappeared from Eastlake that day, and Nellie never saw him again. Mrs. Nash exulted over his departure, for she well knew that her daughter was saved from a fortune-hunter; and Miss Nellie Nash became Mrs. George Lyle the next month, and you may be sure she never regretted her letter.

◆

Some artists are not half as bad as their paint—and the same may be truthfully said of some society women.

A Wild Wedding Night;

OR

THE HEIRESS OF HALCYON HALL.

BY. T C. HARBAUGH.

[Copyright by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 21, May 21. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOME AGAIN.

My first impulse after meeting Gorgon in the hall after locking Mr. Pentham, the detective, in the parlor, was to open the door and let the hound of the law stand face to face with the dwarf, but, suddenly changing my mind, I bolted up the wide stairs, having above all the safety of Marcia at heart, and in a moment I was at her door.

She admitted me after a knock and I stood breathless in the presence of the woman I served.

I had not fully recovered from my encounter with Don Luis Potosi, and Marcia noticed that I was still unstrung. She gently threw her arms around me and drew me sympathetically to her bosom.

"So you have come back—at last!" I heard her say. "I have been waiting for you."

She seemed to have forgotten that I had been at the house at least a part of the night, but, seeing that she was undergoing a strain of suppressed excitement, I did not interpose.

I thought of Pentham and what he would say to Gorgon, the half-witted being, but Marcia broke in suddenly on my thoughts.

"I must tell you," she said. "Judith had a message last night from The Hall."

"From Halcyon Hall?"

"Yes."

"Why Judith?"

"I cannot say. He came in the night and I overheard some of their talk."

"Who came?"

The trained nurse. She called him Parsons."

"Chester Parsons?"

"It must have been."

"The man-demon who ordered me from The Hall!" I exclaimed. "What brought him down?"

"My father——"

Marcia got no further, but seemed on the eve of breaking down.

"Something dreadful is going to happen at The Hall, and soon," she went on, recovering a bit. "I must go up, Lucie."

I drew off and looked at her.

"It will betray your secret and the story of your flight will become known," I said.

"Then let the world know it!" she exclaimed. "I must see my father. He is not long for this world."

"Not in the care of Parsons," I cried.

"That is it. There is some diabolical conspiracy afoot."

"And Parsons is in it. Who sent him to The Hall?"

Marcia shook her head.

She was now wonderfully calm.

"Lucie, dear, you have seen him?"

"The doctor?"

"Yes."

"Tell him nothing about my second flight. He knows the secret of the first one."

"The flight of the night of the tenth?"

"Of course. It was to balk Don Luis—to get away from the man I did not love, though I deceived you all. Father insisted that I wed him and I loved father too well not to promise, but the fulfillment was too much. On the eve of my wedding I fled—fled from a life of misery, but just how I escaped even in my wedding garments let the future tell. You will not acquaint Thaddeus of this new flight? No? Dear Lucie, I depend on you."

"Then tell me," I cried, "how came Don Luis in this house the night I heard the wild music in the red parlor when Mrs. Pattison led you away? He came out of the same room and stood for a moment in the doorway. He must have been with you in the red parlor."

She shuddered.

"He was; but let me forget that night, let me forget the hypnotism of his devilish eyes."

"Was he Mrs. Pattison's friend?"

"He had her in his power."

"She gave you asylum the night of the flight, though she was at The Hall?"

I caught a faint smile on Marcia's lips.

"What a persistent questioner you are, to be sure!" she said.

"Pardon me. I will not question any longer. Then you must go to The Hall?"

"At once!"

"But Judith will report the flight ahead if she is in league with Parsons, and, besides, at this moment there is a detective down in the parlor."

"Let him entertain himself. Nothing, not even Parsons and Don Luis, shall keep me from the arms of my father."

"I left the detective locked in the parlor with Gorgon at the door."

"Gorgon! that imp of darkness?" cried Marcia. "She may give him a touch of her long fingers if he is inquisitive. Let us go."

Reassuring Marcia that I would not desert her on this, her new, adventure, I prepared for the exit from the mansion. We arrayed ourselves for flight and, when all was ready, stole down the back staircase, out into the yard, thence to the stables and into a short street which people of Marcia's quality scarcely ever trod.

Seeking a liveryman, we engaged a carriage and were soon bowling through the city for Halcyon Hall.

Marcia lay back on the cushioned seat and gave herself over to thought.

Like an electric flash a certain thing took possession of my mind. She loved Doctor Crossley! And from what I had heard him say, speaking so often of doing things for her sake, I doubted not that his whole soul was wrapped up in the fair heiress of The Hall. Once or twice I thought seriously of bringing up the subject of my thoughts, but seeing how quiet Marcia was, and divining that she did not wish to be disturbed, I desisted and watched the country through which we were now hastening.

But little passed between us and at last, as we began to climb the hill which would put us down in front of Halcyon Hall, Marcia started suddenly from her seat and touched my wrist.

I started, for a wonderful change had come over her. She no longer was the pale, dignified looking woman, but a tinge had come to her cheeks and her eyes seemed to blaze.

The ride had transformed her into a woman of determined mien, and I knew that she was fit to cope with Parsons and all the rest of the conspirators.

The carriage at last pulled up in front of the long porch with its grayish columns, and I saw the driver open the door.

As he did so I heard a door open and upon looking in the direction of the house I caught sight of the figure of Chester Parsons, the nurse, on the porch.

There was a look of the deepest inquiry on his somber face, and the moment he saw me alight his voice rang out loud and clear:

"Take that woman back to the city! I banished her from this house some time ago——"

"She remains while I stay at The Hall," said another voice, and at that moment Marcia sprang from the vehicle and faced the man on the porch.

The color in Chester Parson's face changed instantly from red to white.

He fell back a pace, not speaking, but I saw that he would recover in an instant, and then would come the tug of war.

"I have not been banished from Halcyon Hall," Marcia continued as she went toward the house. "I am mistress here, and my commands are the ones to be obeyed—not yours, Parsons."

With that she took hold of my arm and we walked forward, the man on the porch looking daggers at us, and when Marcia reached the door she opened it with a longing cry of great joy. She was home again!

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH MARCIA SETTLES WITH PARSONS.

There are chapters in the life of nearly every one which he would blot out if he could because of their unpleasant memories. It is thus in my life, I know, and one of these chapters belongs to our return to Halcyon Hall.

I had feared all along that something terrible had taken place during Marcia's absence, and I recalled my second visit there at Doctor Crossley's request when, as the reader will recollect, I met Dagobert Gray. Many hours had passed since that visit, and in that time much could be done. And when I remembered that he was wholly under the care of Chester Parsons, a man without mercy, my heart sank to immeasurable depths in my bosom.

As for Marcia, she seemed to have been invested with a courage that would have sustained her under any and all circumstances. She was as firm as steel, her hands were tightly clenched, and her every look proved that she had come back to the old Hall for a purpose which not even Parsons, with all his intrigue, could overcome.

We left the nurse on the porch, not caring to look after him, and hurried into the house.

Marcia turned toward the library and opened the broad door.

The large room so familiar to me was darkened and so still it seemed that we heard the echoes of our own footfalls.

For a moment we stood near the door, which I had closed, and then Marcia darted forward.

I heard a cry from her lips and then saw her sink on her knees beside a chair in which gradually rose before me the semblance of a human figure.

"Open the window," said Marcia.

I sprang to obey, but the curtain would not move.

"Tear it down!"

I seized the heavy damask with both hands and pulled it down, the whole falling to the floor with a tremendous crash.

In another moment light shot into the library and I turned to see that Marcia was kneeling beside the ghost of her father, who stared at her like the prisoner of Chillon would have stared could light have shone upon him for a second.

Surely it was the ghost of Dagobert Gray, not the old man himself. The figure was emaciated to the last degree; his large eyes seemed to have crept far back into his head, and in them was the stare of the mad. His hands were mere shadows and his garments seemed ready to fall from his attenuated frame. Never again may I look upon such a semblance of living humanity.

The sight curdled my blood and I shrank back while I gazed pitying those in my presence.

Suddenly Marcia sprang erect and turned upon me.

"Send for Chester Parsons," she commanded.

It was a useless command, for at that moment the door opened and the man himself stood before us.

"Ha! you come without being sent for," said Marcia as she caught sight of him. "I'm glad of that. This is your work, Chester Parsons?"

The brute looked from Marcia to the figure in the chair. His dark eyes shot shafts of fire and he seemed to gloat over the work of his hands.

"Answer me!" cried Marcia. "This is your work?"

"You've said so."

"Who sent you to this employment?"

"My master."

"Good! You have a master, then?"

The man laughed derisively.

"See here. If you think to pump Chester Parsons you will have a time of it. He can keep his secrets as well as the next one. He knows whom he serves and he serves well his master."

"Brute! Villain!" and Marcia advanced a step toward the man. "This is to be your last victim. You have completed your task, I fear. You have killed my father."

"Think so, eh? Well, I must own that he was a little unruly at times and had to be disciplined."

"Brute!" again cried the fair girl.

"This is your last victim," she suddenly continued. "Your authority ends this moment. I have come back to Halcyon Hall."

"Sent back by your friend and abettor, the mad doctor, I suppose?"

I saw Marcia start at these words, but she did not lose sight of the work before her.

"Stand where you are, Chester Parsons," she said sternly. "For this work you pay where you stand."

I saw a bit of pallor touch the man's face which told me that, however brutish his nature, like all brutes he was a coward at heart. Well might he grow pale, for the hand of Marcia had suddenly shot upward and in it glittered the barrel of a derringer.

The arm never trembled, which made me prouder than ever of my fair mistress, and as I looked from her to the man I saw that he had fallen back a step toward the door.

"There is mercy in my heart, but none for you," she went on, her voice changing suddenly to one cold and bereft of pity. "You may be a tool, but you are also a conspirator. You were in the city last night. You went down to report to your fellow conspirators; you sneaked back here to the completion of the devilish work allotted to you. You say you betray nobody."

The meeting of the man's lips meant "Yes."

"Very well. I will not ask you to betray Don Luis Potosi. The accomplice in a crime like this is as guilty as the principal. This is worse than murder. This is the unpardonable sin. Chester Parsons, prepare to stand in a moment at the bar of Heaven, there to give an account of your stewardship at Halcyon Hall."

The light from the window fell upon the two main figures in this exciting scene.

I saw Marcia standing erect with the leveled weapon in her hand, while with a face as white as a shroud the man at the door looked over the deadly barrel into her pitiless eyes.

"Don't look to me for mercy," said Marcia a moment later. "You must look to your God for that. I am going to pay you for your work at Halcyon Hall. I shall——"

There was a noise, a faint cry behind the determined girl, and Dagobert Gray turned in his chair.

"Marcia, my child!" he murmured.

Marcia heard him and the words must have gone directly to her heart, but they did not quiver the arm that directed the revolver at Chester Parsons' head.

"Are you ready?" she asked.

"You can't kill me, woman. In the name of God, you dare not take a human life without a show of mercy."

"What mercy did you show the wretched being in yonder chair?"

"But they hired me to do it."

"Who hired you?"

Again the coarse lips of Parsons met determinedly and he seemed to drop back into the courts of silence.

"I see. You will not betray your masters. You will confess so far and no farther. The accomplice is as guilty as the principal, I tell you. Prepare to die!"

"For God's sake, woman——"

The sentence was broken by the report of a pistol and with a cry Parsons staggered away, throwing up his hands wildly, while Marcia, without a glance at her work, threw the smoking weapon to the floor and, turning quickly, caught her father in her arms.

In another moment I heard the door open and looked in time to see the figure of Parsons the nurse fall headlong into the hall.

CHAPTER XIX.

DR. CROSSLEY PLAYS A BOLD HAND.

Doctor Thaddeus Crossley stood in the shadow of a building in a narrow street in the Crescent City watching a certain house with the eyes of a keen detective.

He had been there some time and when

$3.75 A GOLD WATCH for $3.75

A perfect beauty. [illegible] 20 YEARS [illegible]

R. E. CHALMERS & CO. [illegible] CHICAGO.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

the door opened and a man emerged from the place the doctor threw himself upon his trail and followed him.

The tracked one walked rapidly and at last entered the Red Casino, into which disreputable place he was followed by the man at his heels.

Antonio Ferral went directly to one of the many tables in the Casino and found a crowd of gamblers to his liking. In a little time he was deep in the game on hand and the chips became a pile at his elbow.

Not far away the doctor-detective watched his man, seeming to lose interest in everything but the one object he had in view.

The hours wore on; the players in the room grew more hilarious or subdued according to the wills and freaks of fortune; but not for a moment did Doctor Crossley take his eyes from the sallow-faced man at the table.

At last a boy entered the place and laid a note at Antonio's elbow. He glanced at it one moment and the next had opened it and devoured its contents.

Then, as if the delivery of the note had turned the scales of luck, Antonio began to lose. He played recklessly, to the astonishment of all, and the pile of winnings dwindled away.

As the last chip vanished he rose and left the Casino. Crossley, who had lost nothing of this, followed his example.

On the pavement beyond the red light of the place, Antonio was joined by a man who said something to him in low tones. The pair started off hastily and in a little while had separated, Ferral going back to the house from which Doctor Crossley had tracked him.

The persistent doctor took his position where he could not be easily seen, and waited. In half an hour—it was past midnight now, in fact, nearing dawn—when the little door opened and a man who did not look much like Antonio Ferral slipped out. In another moment he had his old tracker at his heels.

He entered another part of the city, strange to say moving toward Doctor Crossley's office, and the doctor himself marveled at this thing.

His astonishment increased when he saw Ferral, now disguised, stop in front of the window which bore his name, and peer into the room beyond. The interior of the office, never locked even when he was away, was dimly lighted, and Crossley smiled when he saw Ferral enter.

In another moment he was at the door, but in his hand glittered the barrel of a revolver.

As Crossley stepped into the office the form of a man turned upon him, and in another instant that person was covered by the deadly weapon.

Antonio Ferral started and swept a hand toward his own weapon, but the voice of Crossley checked it half way.

"Sit down," sternly commanded the doctor.

The figure seemed to stiffen before him, but the voice of the physician rang out more sternly than ever.

"Sit down or die!" he said. "Sit down, I say, Don Luis."

The man sullenly obeyed.

"I know you and you remember me," continued Doctor Crossley. "I was one of the invited guests on the night of the tenth. You are Don Luis Potosi, sometimes and in some places called Antonio Ferral. You came to see me, I presume."

The man in the chair did not reply for a moment.

"I came to see you," he admitted.

"You have lately had an interview with Chester Parsons, the nurse at Halcyon Hall. He must have come to the city tonight, and from what I saw of him he must have met with an accident, for his head is bandaged."

Seeing himself cornered, and knowing that Crossley must have been at his heels, the now unmasked man grinned and nodded.

"You did it," he said through set teeth at Crossley. "It was in part your playing. You helped Marcia away that night."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it. Fool was I not to have discovered it sooner."

"Good luck for me, I suppose," answered the doctor.

"The very best, sir," snapped the Portuguese. "In the first place, Marcia never loved you, Don Luis; she loved her father, and it was for his sake alone that she promised to become your wife, but when the moment of trial came she could not keep her promise, not even to her parent, and so there was no wedding."

"And you came as the guest and pretended not to know anything of her flight? Ah, if I had suspected it then!"

Doctor Crossley did not speak for a moment, but watched the play of passion on Don Luis' face.

"Very well," said the Portuguese at last, making an attempt to rise from his chair. "We will be quits, then. But beware of Potosi!"

"You mean beware of the little dagger with the head of Christ, I suppose."

The only answer was a dark glance and the clenching of the man's hands.

"Don't be in a hurry, Don Luis, I conjure you," suddenly continued Crossley.

"You dare not detain me."

"Dare not?" and Crossley laughed.

"I am dangerous," hissed the Portuguese. "Let me out of here, I demand."

"Not yet. You are my prisoner. Stand up, sir. Now throw your infernal dagger with the Christ upon it on the table yonder. You refuse?"

The revolver in Crossley's hand came up until it rested on a level with the dark face before it. There was not a tremor in the hand that held the weapon, and Don Luis when he looked across the little space and caught the gleam of his adversary's eyes must have seen that to disobey would be death.

With the sullenness of the beaten tiger he drew the black-handled dagger from its place of concealment and tossed it upon the cloth.

"That's it, sir," triumphantly said Thaddeus Crossley. "That's the emblem of The Inferno, the murderous league of Portugal. Do you know that Dagobert Gray had a dagger like that, but some one stole it? Its point is death. Why did you drive it so deep into the bosom of Mrs. Pattison? A little scratch would have done as well, for there's poison on the point of the blade—the poison of wourali."

A tigerish cry at this sudden accusation leaped madly from the throat of Don Luis.

The next instant he threw himself forward like a bolt hurled from a catapult and landed against Doctor Thaddeus almost before he could brace himself against the attack.

Back against the door went the two men, but Crossley did not neglect to seize his antagonist, and immediately, after a quick movement, he threw Don Luis around and pushed the pistol against his head.

"You will live to hang, or die here—just as you please, murderer!" cried Crossley as he forced the man back. "God knows why you killed Mrs. Pattison; but science has doomed you, for her blood found in her room and on your handkerchief will tighten the noose round your guilty neck."

Two minutes later a bound man glared from the depths of the office chair at Doctor Crossley.

Vainly did he try his bonds, but they did not yield. All he could do was to glare at his captor and wish for a moment of freedom with the black-handled dagger in his hand.

Such was the story I afterward heard from Doctor Crossley's lips, and now, begging the reader's pardon, I resume my own narrative.

CHAPTER XX

WEDDING BELLS ONCE MORE.

When I saw Parsons stagger into the hall after Marcia's shot I sprang toward the fair girl who had reached her father's side.

The door had shut between us and the trained nurse and fellow conspirator and I forgot him in the excitement of the moment. We wanted to administer to the feeble old man in the chair, and Marcia soon gave orders for his removal to his own room.

A brief search for Parsons revealed the fact that the man had completely vanished, and it is needless to say that we were glad to have him out of our sight. I imagined that he had ran away smarting from his wound, for we could track him out of the house and some distance from it by his own blood, and Marcia declared that it was a good riddance, though she added that the rascal should answer before a court of justice for his diabolical treatment of her father.

Dagobert Gray came slowly back to himself and gradually recognized his child.

We did not know, of course, that Doctor Crossley had seen Parsons meet Don Luis Potosi the following night in the city, and therefore knew npthing of the arrest of the Portuguese in the doctor's office.

We were to have another visitor at The Hall.

The shadows were deepening among the trees when I suddenly caught sight of a deep veiled figure under one of the oaks.

A thrill went through me like a pointed shaft. It was the woman in black, the person I had seen last in Antonio Ferral's room and, as I doubted not—though it was hard to believe it—the same being I had also seen hurled from the cliffs of Halcyon Hall the night before the interrupted wedding.

The figure moved not under the tree, but seemed to be watching the old house.

Marcia knew nothing of her coming to the grounds and I resolved not to disturb her.

The night darkened, a fresh breeze came up from the river, and Marcia went to her father's rooms to administer to his comfort.

Still the ghost-like figure under the oak moved not.

I was called from the window for a moment, and when I came back I looked again and started, for the old tree did not have a companion.

What had become of her, and what did she want at Halcyon Hall?

In another moment I had bounded upstairs and was about to turn in direction of Marcia's chamber, when I thought I heard the slight rustle of a garment behind me.

In another instant I stood face to face with the woman in black.

Veiled was she no longer.

The faint light that fell upon her figure revealed a face as white as snow and beautiful despite the lines of suffering that were easily seen.

A pair of eyes glowed like fire behind raven lashes and the tall, graceful form would have elicited praise anywhere.

Seeing me, for she could not help doing so, she suddenly advanced and stretched out a hand as white as her face.

"Where is she?" she demanded.

I immediately fell back toward Marcia's door and planted myself firmly in front of it.

"Is she in there? I must see her!" continued the strange one.

"You canont pass me," I said, whereupon the door behind me suddenly opened and I knew that Marcia Gray was also looking at the person who confronted me.

"What is it, Lucie?" asked my mistress.

"The woman yonder—the woman in black," I answered. "She is something to Don Luis. I saw her last in his apartments and I verily believe I also saw her hurled over the cliffs out yonder the eve of your interrupted wedding."

"What did you see?" cried the strange one. "Did you see me shoot out from his hands into dark space to drop into the Father of Waters? I did not know any one saw but God who guarded me."

"I saw it all," said I.

She looked from me to my mistress, who stood gazing breathlessly at her.

"So this is your mistress?" she said with a smile. "You are Marcia, I presume. Ah! I see. You still love Don Luis even though you fled the night of the wedding. You——"

"Love drives no one from the altar," broke in Marcia, as she gently pushed me aside and stepped in front of the woman in black. "On the contrary, it takes one thither. Love Don Luis Potosi? As I love the deadly serpents in the brakes of Louisiana, as I love the murderer, the man who carries a poisoned dagger, but for gain. Yes, I love Don Luis Potosi as I love the things I have mentioned."

Then to my horror the right hand of the woman came out from beneath the folds of her garments and she threw a dagger at Marcia's feet.

"It is well!" she said in a changed voice. "I came to kill if you had the least affection for him. I am his wife; I am the Senora Potosi, who fluttered around the flame of love in my native land and who was basely deserted by the man who would have made you his wife but for your flight. I would have killed him last night but for his strength and flight. Let him beware! The vengeance of Esteva the Mad will follow him to the end of the trail."

With this she held out her hands toward Marcia as though she invited her to an embrace, but the following moment she turned and vanished down the corridor.

"Stop her! Bring her back!" cried my mistress to me.

I sprang away to carry out the command, but a door was slammed in my face. I heard hurried footsteps on the stairs and I knew that the vengeful wife of Don Luis was gone.

And she carried with her the secret of her visit to Halcyon Hall the night before the interrupted wedding, as well as the full story of her escape from death when her infuriated husband threw her over the cliffs into the seething flood below.

* * *

It came about that Doctor Crossley had done more than all the keen-sighted detectives in the Crescent City, for he had fastened the crime of the Pattison home upon Don Luis Potosi, for Gorgon, the hideous dwarf, opened her mouth and told how she had seen him in the house the night of the crime, how she had also caught him in a crouching position at Mrs. Pattison's door. But the strangest thing that came out at the trial was the fact that Gorgon was Mrs Pattison's child; the leader of fashion, ashamed of Gorgon's hideousness, having shut her up in her own house and kept her secluded from the world.

During Don Luis' trial no one seemed to see the woman in black who watched the proceedings eagerly. She did not make herself conspicuous.

On the last day of the trial, as the high sheriff was escorting the prisoner from the courthouse along the corridor, the Portuguese gave a sudden cry and turned pale.

The curious people who lined the narrow space heard the cry, but could not interpret it. Some saw a woman clad in black immediately slip away.

"What is it?" asked the sheriff.

Don Luis looked up into his face.

"They'll never hang me," he said with a grim smile. "I'm a dead man now."

In another moment he pitched forward and fell to the floor, and those who bent over him saw a drop of blood on the back of his hand. He was dead when they reached him and the woman in black was not in sight. It was the poison of the wourali, and the vengeance of Esteva Potosi.

In time old Dagobert Gray recovered much of his reason, but not all, though Doctor Crossley did all he could for him. He would sit on the porch in the soft Southern twilight and dream with Marcia looking tenderly on while her husband, the doctor, whom she loved even when she promised her father to become the wife of the Portuguese, watched the calm but wrinkled face with all tenderness.

Yes, it was a quiet wedding they had at Halcyon Hall; this time Mrs. Pattison did not flash in her jewels, nor did Don Luis storm about the house hunting for a missing bride, nor was I thinking of the woman I had seen hurled over the cliffs; but I thought of the fair bride who had fled from one altar to become an inmate of Mrs. Pattison's house, to which came Don Luis Potosi with his hypnotic arts and poisoned dagger—the man who in the shadow of the noose fell dead in the very temple of justice as surely killed as was his fashionable victim.

I afterward learned that Doctor Crossley was a party to Marcia's flight, and I have told how well he kept his secret and played his part, and when my term of service at The Hall ended, for I loved and was wedded like other people, the last kiss I received came from the lips of another little Marcia as sweet and fair of face as her mother.

As for Chester Parsons, the tool of Don Luis, he vanished completely, let us hope to expiate his crimes in some other land.

The End.

◆

The Curse of the Geisha-Girl

[Continued from Page Three.]

"I do not understand anything about all this, but if you cause my sister a single heartache I think I will kill you. I will keep your secret, but you must not hurt my sister," and he replied in a voice which rang with sincerity:

"I would rather destroy all the rest of the world than cause her even an annoyance."

This charming story of life and love in the far East will be continued in next week's issue of the Ledger. Each person sending in a subscription to this paper is entitled to our free cameras and patterns as advertised on pages thirteen and fifteen.

◆

Light Trough Cracks.

When L. L. Loree, the new president of the Rock Island system, was chief engineer of the Cleveland diaision of the Pennsylvania Railroad, a friend of his brought him, one day, a copy of Ibsen's "Ghosts."

"Read this," the man said, "and then tell me what you think of it."

Mr. Loree is a great reader. His library at Sewickley is unusually large and well chosen. He took "Ghosts" home with him, and, reading it, he was much impressed.

"Well," said his friend the next day, "did you read that book of Ibsen's?"

"Yes," said Mr. Loree.

"What do you think of Ibsen, anyway?"

"What do you think of him?" Mr. Loree said, cautiously.

"Why, I think the man's cracked."

Mr. Loree shook his head and smiled.

"Often," he said, "a bright light shines through a crack."

You may have observed that a bachelor can hold a baby [illegible] as a [illegible] throw [illegible]

STEM SET STEM WIND
$5.95 Don't BUY A WATCH
[illegible] Waltham [illegible]
Give both P. O. and [illegible] state plainly whether ladies or gents size. Offer can [illegible] continued long. [illegible]
LADIES OR GENTS
ALLEN & CO., Wholesale Jewelers, Dept. [illegible] 207 to 221 Dearborn Street, CHICAGO, ILL.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

TEETH Fill your own. Sample (Fill 5) and directions 15c. DR. HOLLAND, MARSEILLES, ILL.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

$300 Genuine Confederate money for $1.00. $100 for 50c R. L. Maxwell, So. Bend, Ind.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

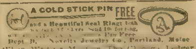
KIDNEY [illegible] permanently cured—no patent medicine. [illegible] and full information free. Write now [illegible]
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

PATENTS PROTECT YOUR IDEAS. Consultation free Fee dependent on success Est 1864 MILO B. STEVENS & CO., 869 14th St., WASHINGTON
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

OPIUM and Liquor Habit cured in 10 to 20 days. No pay till cured. Write Dr. J. L. Stephens Co., Dept. B. 2, Lebanon, Ohio.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

WANTED MEN TO LEARN BARBER TRADE. Few weeks completes by our method. Graduates earn $20 weekly. Positions guaranteed. Write nearest branch. Moler System of Colleges, Chicago, Ill., St. Louis, Mo., Cincinnati, Ohio, Omaha, Neb., or New Orleans, La.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

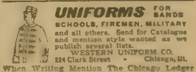
WHISKEY How to make genuine OLD WHISKEY for [illegible] a gallon. Fifty other valuable Formulas FREE. Huestis & Co., Dept. B, Jersey City, N. J.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.



A GOLD STICK PIN FREE and a Beautiful Seal Ring! [illegible] Pin Free
Dept. B, Novelty Jewelry Co., Portland, Maine
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger

I PAY SPOT CASH FOR MILITARY BOUNTY LAND WARRANTS issued to soldiers of any war. Also Soldiers' Additional Homestead Rights. Write me at once FRANK H. REGER, Barth Block, DENVER, COLO
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

FITS I will send a full two weeks' treatment of my wonderful new $1 cure [illegible] for Epileptics" to anyone wishing to test it. In many cases the fits are stopped by this FREE treatment [illegible] Address Dr. Chas. W. Green, 119 [illegible]
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger



UNIFORMS FOR BANDS SCHOOLS, FIREMEN, MILITARY and all others. Send for Catalogue and mention style wanted as we publish several lists.
WESTERN UNIFORM CO.
224 Clark Street • Chicago, Ill.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger

WETO GRAPH
The Great Secret Writing System
FOR LOVERS AND OTHERS
Every lover and every one who writes letters should have a Weto Graph. It is a system of secret writing for correspondence, etc. If you have a Weto Graph you can [illegible] secret memorandum [illegible] Send 10 cents and we will send the Weto Graph by mail, with full instructions. Address PENN PUBLISHING CO., PARNASSUS, PA.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

Why Pay Cash
WHEN YOU CAN BUY ON
Easy Credit Terms
PIANOS $124.75 UP.
ORGANS $19.00 UP.
SEWING MACHINES $7.50 UP.
STOVES and RANGES [illegible] UP.
HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE
Of all kinds at 60 cents up.
IRON and STEEL SAFES,
TYPEWRITERS and OFFICE FURNITURE From $5.25 up.
We are the largest manufacturers on earth, have unlimited capital and sell direct from the workshop to the fireside on EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS to honorable people in all parts of the world. No other manufacturer will let you use the goods for years while slowly paying for them.
Write for information and Free Catalogue s Dept H
THE ENGLEWOOD CO.
Consolidated Factories
61-63 Randolph St., Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

BOYS AND GIRLS CORNER

The Young Castaways;

OR

MAROONED ON A SAND-KEY.

BY ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE.

[Copyright by the Author]

Begun in No. 23, June 4. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER VI.

WRECKED ON A LEE SHORE.

Teddy was making fair progress on the repairs of the Loon, though it did prove to be hard work, considering the fact that he had so few proper tools with which to accomplish the task, and the material for repairs was so limited.

He felt fairly encouraged with his enterprise, and promised that, when a certain time had elapsed, he would have the cedar boat ready for their voyage to some other island, where they might hope to find some of their kind, and eventually board a vessel.

Teddy knew his Robinson thoroughly, and was able to surprise his companion in various ways, very often agreeably.

Of course there was no need of their attempting many of the things which that famous Crusoe accomplished, since their stay on the sand-key was not likely to be of great duration; and, besides, they did not have the material for making pots, nor were there wild goats to capture or tame.

Possibly it might be up to them sooner or later to defend themselves, not against cannibals, but some of the lawless spirits that roam these semi-tropical seas in search of plunder, ready to rob a planter, or pillage a wreck wherever it might be found. A story of the Caribbean Sea would hardly be complete without the introduction of such elements, for they certainly abound in that home of the old-time buccaneer, almost as cruel and crafty as the chaps who cruised in search of those famous silver-laden ships of the Spanish Main, of which history has so much to say.

Maro knew this, for had he not heard many weird tales told around the galley-fire on board some fishing boat lying on the Grand Banks one season, related by grizzled old salts who had voyaged many a time to South American ports ere turning fishermen?

Thus by degrees he caused the young Canadian to feel more or less uneasiness concerning these things, and fall to speculating whether or not it would be to their advantage to have a vessel anchor off the island, seeing that the chances of their being roughly handled seemed so very strong.

Although they had kept a bright lookout for another bit of luck, they had failed to discover a second turtle ashore, so that only the fond memory of those delicious steaks remained to haunt them, since the storm had carried the balance of their stock of meat adrift.

With some self-raising flour which he had in one of the tin cannisters practical camper Teddy fashioned some glorious flapjacks, which he cooked in approved manner over the fire, even giving each the traditional toss in the air when ready to turn it over, which wonderful operation no doubt accounts for the name of the toothsome morsel. And Maro vowed he had never in all his life partaken of a feast so delightful as those cakes when sprinkled with a little sugar.

We all look back to certain occasions when a ferocious appetite makes us imagine we are feasting on nectar of the gods, though under other circumstances we might turn up our noses in disgust at the identical bill of fare.

Let us be thankful, then that there are such oases in our lives when we are ready to accept small favors with full hearts.

They drank their coffee without milk, and reckoned it ambrosia, though Maro had never been able to bring himself to like it this way in his comfortable home.

The sun became so hot about the middle of the day that they were glad to knock off work and lie around under the shade of the trees, where the ocean breeze cooled their fevered brows; but a few hours spent in recuperating their wasted energies could be easily made up in the early morning or while the moon held high carnival, for it was now drawing near its full stage, and rose just before the red orb of day plunged behind the watery horizon in the west.

Many things had been carried out, looking toward their added comfort; and still Maro found his list of jobs to be done growing longer all the while, so that it did not appear as though he would lack for work, should their enforced stay on the isle run far into the weeks.

When indications pointed toward another spell of bad weather they were in a position to face it with less fear of results than on the other occasion.

Toward evening one day black clouds began to sweep up from the storm quarter, and presented such a wonderful appearance that the boys knocked off work in order to watch the advance of the outriders.

The dark masses rolling in battalions looked for all the world like cavalry charging into the mouth of cannon that spurted out fire and smoke as the lightnings flashed, while the deep-toned thunder added to the picturesque deception.

It thrilled them with its magnificence, and both declared they could not remember ever having witnessed such a grand spectacle in more northern climes.

By mere chance Teddy cast his weather eye out over the ocean, possibly because he thought to see how the water might look with the angry glow of the lightning reflected from its dark and forbidding surface.

"See!" he exclaimed, suddenly, "a sail, a sail, and bearing down on the island hand over fist!"

Maro immediately saw that what he spoke was the truth, for there in plain sight could be seen the white sail of a small boat which flew before the increasing wind like a frightened bird.

"Can they make a harbor? he said anxiously, for it began to look as though human lives might be placed in jeopardy when the storm in all its fury broke.

"It's an even chance. If the blast will only hold off ten minutes longer perhaps they can run in; but I'm so afraid the chances are against them. We must be on the watch to do what little we can if the worst comes to pass," declared the young cruiser from the Northland.

Perhaps those on board were wreckers, or lawless spongers who would not hesitate to rob them of their little possessions; but to the credit of the boys be it said that they never gave this matter a moment's thought, only remembering that danger hung over the heads of those who were their fellows, and that perhaps it might be their privilege to render some assistance.

That was where they proved the manly spirit animating their lives.

It was a time of considerable anxiety to the marooned lads, and they watched the progress of the scudding little craft with an interest that manifested itself in held breath and more or less trembling hands.

"There she comes!" cried Maro suddenly, pointing out to where a smother of white foam told how the squall was rushing down with the speed of a race-horse upon the vessel.

There came a tremendous blast of thunder just then, and as though this reverberating crash had burst the reservoirs of the low-hanging clouds the rain swooped down in a perfect torrent, and like magic the whole scene was wiped out of sight, so that only a blank wall of descending water greeted their strained vision.

The boys were so overcome with concern for the safety of those on board the vessel that they gave little heed to the fact that they had already become soaked to the skin. That was a mighty small matter as compared with the uncertainty hanging over the fate of those who were out yonder in all that turmoil of raging waters, the sport of a tropical storm.

So the boys gave up all thoughts of supper, and, standing as close to the tumbling waters as they dared, strove to pierce that veil spread out before them so tantalizingly.

Once or twice Teddy thought he caught sounds that resembled shouts or screams; but the roar of the wind through the palmettos, together with the deafening crash of the great waves on the sandy beach, made a combination that created all manner of weird noises, so that it would seem an utter impossibility for the voice of a weak, struggling sailor to be heard amid the din.

They hoped that after the first violence of the storm had worn off they might be able to see something of what was going on out yonder, but the shades of night had meanwhile swept down upon the scene, so that the darkness of the gale was succeeded by that marking the close of day.

The moon would not rise for perhaps an hour, being just past her prime, and meanwhile a terrible spell of gloom hung over the immediate vicinity, only relieved when a blinding sheet of lightning shot athwart the black heavens, giving everything a ghastly look.

"This is awful," said Teddy in his friend's ear, as they hung side by side and kept vigil, hoping to be of some use should any one of the vessel's crew survive the shock and be washed ashore.

"I'm afraid they've all been drowned," declared Teddy finally, as time passed and they neither saw nor heard anything from the ghostly craft that had been bearing down upon the island before the hurricane blow burst upon the scene.

"The moon must be coming up, for it's getting much lighter. Perhaps that will help us some. We must go along the shore and keep a good lookout. I've known of many a poor fellow being washed up on the sand, and, being too weak to help himself, carried back to sea by another wave larger than the first," said Maro.

"It's hard luck all around, both for those poor chaps as well as ourselves, eh, mate?" remarked Teddy.

"But I guess we've got the best of it. Anyhow, I wouldn't like to change places with them just now. Let's move along and see if anything has come ashore."

The conditions had improved in various ways, for the worst of the blow seemed to have passed; while the moon behind the clouds served to dissipate the awful blackness that had for a brief time hung over the scene of the tragedy.

That the small craft had surely been wrecked neither of our boys doubted for a moment, for it seemed beyond all reason that anything could have lived through such a fierce experience, especially when close upon a lee shore.

It was Teddy who made the first discovery and immediately they found themselves stooping over some object that lay spread out on the beach.

It was a man beyond any question, and at first glance they feared he must be beyond all hope, for he had all the appearance of one drowned; but Maro had assisted many times in restoring to life some unfortunate who had been the sport of the waves, and he knew just how to go about it in order to preserve the vital spark, if so be it still remained in the body.

He whipped the man over on his chest in a certain position, and set Teddy to work pumping his arms with a motion calculated to start the action of his almost exhausted heart.

Success attended his efforts, for after a little the other groaned and showed unmistakable signs of coming to, which gave Teddy reason to increase his efforts, feeling that they were not being wasted.

When the man had so far recovered as to be out of danger, the two boys helped him to a position where he could rest his back against one of the palmettos.

Maro questioned him with regard to his companions, but he was in no condition to talk, and could only mutter faintly that there had been five of them on board the sloop when she struck, and that his fellows had been cast into the sea at the same time as himself.

So our boys started out to patrol the beach, hoping that some good fortune might enable them to save others of the ill-fated crew.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PIRATICAL ANTONIO.

Although the boys walked completely around the little island several times, they discovered no signs of other unfortunates, so that it seemed reasonable to believe that the companions of the man they had saved must have been swept past into the mighty maw of the ocean, and were drowned long before this time.

As it seemed folly to continue the search, they returned to the place where they had left the resuscitated chap.

He was standing up as though his strength had almost in full measure returned during their absence, showing that he could not have received serious injury, though his chances would have been slim indeed had not the young marooners come upon him when they did.

Perhaps he understood how much he owed them; but if so, he was a man not given to many yords, for he certainly made no mention of the fact that he felt under obligations to them.

As near as Maro could make out he appeared to be a pretty tough character, and as he spoke they knew he had Spanish blood in his veins, or perhaps it was Portuguese; but all the same he was fond of ripping out fierce exclamations that had a distinct flavor of the piratical order.

They also discovered that he wore a sash around his waist in the approved manner of those buccaneers made famous through history and tradition. Maro had never run across any of these same blood-thirsty villains in his few cruises, but he had watched their antics on the stage as depicted in the comic opera of the "Pirates of Penzance," and felt positive he could not be mistaken in the breed.

Well, they were two against one, and, besides, it did not appear that Antonio, as he gave his name, could be armed with anything beyond a sheath-knife which he carried in his sash, while they had the gun, a hatchet and a knife apiece.

Then, again, it would seem as though the fellow could hardly be wholly insensible to the fact that these lads had saved his miserable life, and surely he ought to have a grain of gratitude in his make-up for his preservers, even if he failed to manifest the same by means of outward expressions.

They took him to the camp.

Antonio was duly impressed with the va-

I CURE FITS

When I say I cure I do not mean merely to stop them for a time and then have them return again. I mean a radical cure. I have made the disease of FITS, EPILEPSY or FALLING SICKNESS a life-long study. I warrant my remedy to cure the worst cases. Because others have failed is no reason for not now receiving a cure. Send at once for a treatise and a Free Bottle of my infallible remedy. Give Express and Post Office.

PROF. W. H. PEEKE, F. D., 4 CEDAR ST., N.Y.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

FILL YOUR OWN TEETH with Dentaline. Stops pain and decay. Instructions free. Union Dental Co., Chicago.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

MOTHERS Enuresine cures Bed-wetting. Sample free. Dr F. E. May, Box 212, - Bloomington, Ill.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

WHISKEY HOW TO MAKE FINE OLD WHISKEY for less than 23 CENTS A GALLON by mixing a few drugs. Lager Beer 5c a gallon. No still or other machinery needed. These recipes have raised many a poor man to fame & fortune. Full Particulars FREE. NM Lewis & Co., 611 Jackson St., Chicago.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

FAT FOLKS REDUCED 15 lbs a month. No starving, no sickness. Anyone can make remedy at home. Send 4c. for box and particulars. Hall Chemical Co., 227 Box, St. Louis, Mo

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

HUNTING CASE GENTS OR LADIES SIZE

This ELEGANT Watch $3.75

Before you buy a watch cut this out and send it to us with your name and address, and we will send you by express for examination a handsome WATCH AND CHAIN C. O. D. $3.75. Double hunting case beautifully engraved, stem wind and stem set, fitted with richly jeweled movement and guaranteed a correct timekeeper; with long Gold [illegible] chain for Ladies or vest chain for Gents. [illegible] equal to any $35.00 GOLD FILLED WATCH Warranted 20 YEARS pay the express agent $3.75 and it is yours. Our 20 year guarantee sent with each watch. Mention if you want Gents' or Ladies' size. Address H. FARBER & CO. A22, 23 Quincy St., CHICAGO.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

FREE FARMS

The New Homestead law offers every man or woman a farm Free. Send 25 cents for new book containing the new homestead law and the name and location of every United States Land Office. This book tells just where to go for free farms and exactly what to do and how to select the land in the states of Alabama, [illegible], Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, [illegible] Utah, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. [illegible] 25 cents for this new book. W. C. WATKINS & CO., 710 Lewis Block, - - - - Pittsburg, Pa.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

FISH ALWAYS BITE

When you dip your bait in Walton's [illegible] Makes good luck absolutely sure. [illegible] outfit needed. 25c Package, enough for a WHOLE SEASON'S GOOD FISHING, sent, postpaid, on receipt of 25 Cents. J. H. GEORGE & CO., 80 Dearborn St., Chicag

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

This book contains hundreds of wonderful things such as Fortune-telling, Puzzles, Dreams, Charm Omens, Lucky Signs, Astrology, Verses, Love Tokens, Physiology, Psychology. It is filled with valuable things. Don't buy fakes. This is the genuine. One book by mail, postpaid, 10 cents, 3 for 25 cts. Address

BLADAN LEJUR,
Room 401,
Boyce Building,
CHICAGO, ILLS.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

ALTON RAILWAY

"THE ONLY WAY" TO THE

WORLD'S FAIR ST. LOUIS

LOWEST RATES

Our World's Fair guide and rate quotations cost nothing. Write for them.

GEO. J. CHARLTON
General Passenger Agent, Chicago, Ill.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger

riety of their possessions, nor did Maro wholly like the manner in which his black eyes shot around from one object to another, just as though the question might have flashed up in his mind as to whether in the pile of plunder there might not be some treasure-trove. These Spanish-American vagabonds of the Caribbean are ever dreaming of striking it rich some fine day, since they have from infancy heard the most stupendous lies about Captain Kidd, Blackbeard and their tribe secreting fabulous amounts of treasure, and, in fact, come to believe every fairy tale as gospel truth.

Fortunately, they had the means for making a fire, keeping a supply of dry wood under shelter all the while in anticipation of just such an emergency as this.

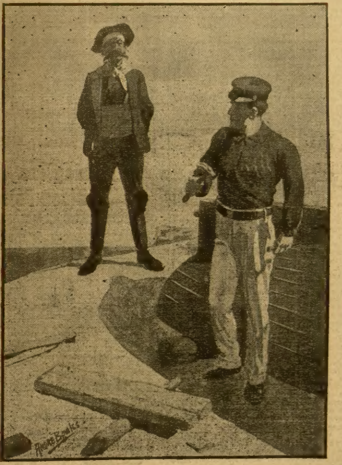
Teddy started a pot of coffee, though their supply had reached a low ebb by this time, and every thimbleful seemed very precious: but all of them were in need of some stimulant after the strain they had gone through.

The rescued man eyed these preparations with satisfaction, and as the odor of the boiling bean began to permeate the atmosphere of the little shelter he sniffed the air hungrily, while his eyes lighted up with a satisfaction too great for words.

Plainly he was not disposed to say anything unless well pumped, and this circumstance did not impress the boys in his favor, since it seemed to them that the right kind of a fellow should have been bubbling over with gratitude toward those who had served him as they had done, and were still doing.

It was still raining, but the violence of the storm was gone, and no doubt the clouds would presently break, allowing the moon to show herself in all her glory.

Maro had busied himself about the fire, cooking some fish which he had caught that day, using as bait the curious little fiddler crabs that scurried in legions along portions of the beach, and which were, as he expressed it, just "pie" to the sheepshead hanging around some rocky spots along the southern end of the island, which rocks were of course of the coquina species, fashioned by minute insects, much as coral is formed under the water.



He saw the captain hovering by.

They fell to and made a meal.

The pirate, as Teddy persisted in calling their guest, had his appetite along with him all right, and it evidently had not been impaired by his submersion in the briny deep, for he ate with such a vim that the boys realized their stay on the island would have to be of less duration than they had hitherto counted on, if they hoped to keep variety on their table.

When the meal had been finished the fellow pulled out a highly-scented black pipe, and loaded it with some wet tobacco that gave out a most terrible odor. Of course the boys could not say anything just then: but they were resolved that if his supply of this villainous weed held out, he would have to enjoy its fumes by himself on the outside of the shelter after this.

It was now really time they learned something about the rescued sailor, and accordingly both began to fire questions at him.

He answered very cautiously, Maro thought, while Teddy was of the opinion he did not fully understand what they asked, which would account for the slowness of his replies, and their seeming lack of candor.

Just as they had supposed, he admitted that he was something of a general utility man, by turns wrecker, sponger, turtler, and always a treasure-seeker.

His boat had come to this region in order to pick up a load of curios and shells to be disposed of at Palm Beach in Florida, to the hordes of rich Yankee tourists frequenting that place while the cold winter held sway up North.

Five besides himself constituted the crew, including the captain, whom he called Vasco Da Gama, a name that struck Maro as having some connection with history; and he wondered whether this modern knight could have possessed many of the same qualities that made the other famous in his day.

Antonio gave it as his opinion that perhaps his comrades might have been swept past the island at the time he was cast up on the shore; but he did not believe they had been drowned. Perhaps he considered them too tough to be easily put out of the way. But one thing or another, he did not seem to bother his head much about their fate, being wholly concerned with regard to his own condition, and the various things that puzzled him with regard to the presence of these two greenhorns on this lone key of the great Caribbean Sea.

From time to time Maro noticed him start and look around eagerly, and he believed the fellow must have a load upon his mind. Indeed, his appearance was the acme of mystery, and both felt sure he must have figured in many a dark deed during his career.

They wished he, too, had taken it into his head to trust his fortunes to the open waters rather than attempt a landing on the island; but since this could not be they were compelled to make the best of a bad bargain.

At least he was a picturesque ruffian, and rather pleased their ideas of what a smuggler or pirate should be.

Perhaps appearances might prove very deceitful, but if the truth were known the fellow would turn out to be a very ordinary sort of cut-throat, a sort of hobo or tramp of the ocean, equal to any miserable little game that promised him boodle, and without a shred of the honor which those old-time worthies used to boast, along with their undoubted valor in affrays of savage sword-thrusts and pistol shots.

Of course he would have to take his turn doing the labors of the day, and while Teddy patched at his boat and Maro fished for their dinner, the newcomer might be set at various tasks of a less congenial nature.

If he grumbled or rebelled, why, they were two against one, and as the original settlers on the island had all right to command obedience to their wishes. You remember how old Robinson enforced his laws and subdued the rebellious Atkins and his turbulent followers.

All the same, the coming of this fellow destroyed much of the charm that had hung over their experience. They could no longer sleep in absolute security, but one must be constantly on guard for fear lest the other be tempted to murder them in order to fall heir to their possessions.

They understood from the expression on his face when the wonderful story of their being cast on the island was being narrated, that he took it all with a grain of allowance. Perhaps he fully believed such daring youths could only be in these seas with the idea of uncovering some fabulously rich treasure, upon the track of which they had been put through a possible bit of yellow parchment that had fallen into their hands. There is nearly always this clew to every one of the stories conected with the finding of Captain Kidd's spoils.

He told them where the island was located, and that others lay not more than fifty miles to the west, which of course was welcome information to the young maroon-ers. If the weather held fair for a couple of days they could easily reach one of these other islands in the patched-up Loon.

It was not very pleasant to think of having this vagrant sleeping alongside, but that must be endured for one night. On the following day, since their quarters were so very crowded, he must construct some means of shelter for himself.

How easy it was to plan! and yet in a wink of the eye the best laid schemes of men have been tumbled to the earth by circumstances of which they had rested in ignorance.

It happened with the boys, and the shock was deadly cruel, since they had no warning of its approach.

While they sat steaming their garments before the blaze, and putting such questions as occurred to them to the rescued man, Teddy's quick ears caught the plain and unmistakable sound of voices outside.

CAMPAIGN YEAR!
ALL THE BEST
BANDS
Are equipping themselves with
Lyon & Healy Instruments,
Drums and Uniforms
40 Years the World's Standard
Further ahead of competition today than ever!
New Models! New Styles! New Prices! New Terms!
Send for New Big Catalogue and Copy
of the New Band Herald FREE.
LYON & HEALY 3 Adams St., Chicago

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

WANTED Strong Young Men for Firemen & Brakemen on all railroads. Firemen average $65 monthly, and become Engineers, averaging $125. Brakemen average $60, become conductors and average $105. Name position preferred. Send stamp for particulars. RAILWAY ASSOCIATION, Box 15, Sta. B, Brooklyn, N. Y.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

A BIG SILK OFFER.

We have made a contract for several tons of fine silk remnants—the entire lot will be given away FREE to readers of WOMAN'S WORLD. These remnants are all silk—large pieces, all the colors of the rainbow; just the right material to make crazy quilts, sofa pillows, chair cushions, pin cushions, etc. WOMAN'S WORLD is a large magazine, profusely illustrated in colors. It has a lot of information and departments, dramatic news, household hints, puzzles, fashions, young folks' departments, and good stories by prominent writers. WOMAN'S WORLD is better than a great many dollar magazines. We are now printing 600,000 copies each issue. To introduce our magazine to thousands of new readers, we make you a special trial offer—send only 10 cents and we will send you WOMAN'S WORLD five months and also a large lot of these fine silk remnants, postpaid. Send 25 cents and we will send WOMAN'S WORLD one year and 3 lots of silk, postpaid. Our magazine will astonish you—and the silk will surely please you. Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back right away. Write today. WOMAN'S WORLD, Dept. 86 CHICAGO, ILL.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

SUDDEN DEATH

BE WARNED IN TIME. Is your heart weak? Do you wish to drop down as if shot? Anywhere? Anytime? That which many call nervousness, kidney, liver, or lung disease often means a weak or diseased heart.

For such sufferers my Heart Tablets are needed. Perhaps you know of them. They cure all forms of heart weakness, quickly and permanently. If you have one or all of these symptoms, I advise you to use the Heart Tablets at once.

HEART DISEASE SYMPTOMS: Fluttering, palpitation, or skipping beats (always due to weak or diseased heart); shortness of breath from exertion; tenderness, numbness or pain in left side, arm, or under shoulder blade; fainting spells; dizziness; hungry or weak spells; spots before the eyes; sudden starting in sleep, dreaming, nightmare; choking sensation in throat; oppressed feeling in chest; cold hands and feet; painful to lie on left side; dropsy; swelling of the feet or ankles (one of the surest signs); neuralgia around the heart; sudden deaths rarely result from other causes. These tablets will do just what I claim.

Dr. F. G. KINSMAN,
Box 972 AUGUSTA, MAINE.

FREE. To prove how absolutely I believe in them, to prove that they will do exactly what I say, I will send a box free to any name and address sent me. One trial will do more to convince you than any amount of talk. It will cost you nothing, and may save your life. Send for a trial box and enclose stamp for postage.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

To Ledger Readers.

Thousands of persons seeing The CHICAGO LEDGER are anxious to receive it regularly and we are making a very liberal offer. The annual subscription to the Weekly CHICAGO LEDGER is $1.00, and everyone who sends in $1.00 within the next 30 days for a year's subscription will receive FREE a KING CAMERA with Complete Outfit for developing and printing pictures, including Silver Paper, Trays, Plates and all necessary Chemicals. We send the CAMERA FREE and prepay charges on it.

Remember you get The LEDGER for a year for $1.00. This is 52 weeks. THE CAMERA IS FREE. This is a magnificent offer, allowing you to get all the fine Continued Stories. The offer is good for 30 days from date of this paper.

The CHICAGO LEDGER is distinctly in the line of Progress. As a purveyor of Romance and Entertaining Literature it has no superior. No other American Story Paper illustrates its matter so profusely or with such care; no other periodical devoted to fiction and humor goes to the expense of using color work generally in its pages, as is done in THE LEDGER. Improvement is manifest in the quality of the stories published, and this improvement will continue. The new form of the LEDGER, sixteen pages instead of eight, makes it convenient to preserve the fascinating novels which appear in its pages, both for yourself and your friends. By sending us $1.00 you get the LEDGER for one year and the KING CAMERA, which is a first-class CAMERA IN ALL RESPECTS. It takes pictures 2 inches by 2 inches in size and is complete and ready for use. Embrace this splendid opportunity at once while the offer is open. Address,

CHICAGO LEDGER, BOYCE BUILDING, CHICAGO

No Man Is Lost.

I Have Found a Philippine Remedy That Restores Vigor to Every Weak and Nervous Man —It Never Fails.

TRY IT AT MY EXPENSE

I have a quick and permanent cure for men that entirely disproves all the old notions about "lost manhood." I offer to every weak man a private home treatment that will positively stop unnatural weakening drains and impart full strength, size and vigor to the wasted and weakened parts, so he will never again suffer the shameful misery of sexual weakness. This remarkable formula has not once failed me, and I

stake my professional renown that it positively cures sexual weakness at all ages and stages of the malady, quickly and forever. I care not who has failed to cure you, or what was the original cause of your weakness, whether from injury, sickness, early indiscretions, excesses, mental worry or physical overexhaustion, this remedy will surely and quickly bring back to you the joy and comfort of manly strength. VITALA is the most potent and powerful specific the world has ever known for sexual failure; purely vegetable and harmless, it stands today the only recognized cure for weak men. I fully believe in the glory of a manly man, and want every sad sufferer to reap the benefit of my discovery. Whoever may read these lines is welcome. A simple letter addressed to Dr. Frederick Main, Lock Box 654, Jackson, Mich., will bring the treatment to you free by return mail. There are no C. O. D. charges to pay, now or ever, and no marks or advertisement on the plain sealed cover. All letters sacredly private. Write me today and be cured before this generous free offer is withdrawn.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

BOOKS! PHOTOS! TIP TOP! Send stamp for circular. C. CONROY, 122 Park Row, N.Y.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

MAGIC DIP NEEDLE for LOCATING GOLD and Silver Ore, Lost or Hidden Treasures. Book and testimonials free. P. & M. AGENCY, [illegible] PENN STREET, READING, PA

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

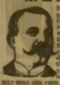
RODS for locating gold and silver, lost treasures, etc. Guaranteed. Circular 2 cts. Address BRYANT BROS., Box 121-37, DALLAS, Texas

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

MENDING TISSUE

The WONDER of the Age. No sewing or darning. Repairs clothing, silk, satin, cotton goods, ribbons, fabrics of all kinds, kid gloves, mackintoshes, umbrellas, parasols, stockings, etc. Package, postpaid, 10 cents; 3 packages, 25 cents. Address Penn Publishing Co., Parnassus, Pa.

MEN CURED



If you have small, weak organs, lost power or weakening drains, our Vacuum Organ Developer will restore you without drugs or electricity. STRICTURE and VARICOCELE permanently cured in from 1 to 4 weeks; 90,000 in use; effect immediate; not one failure; none returned. No C. O. D. fraud. If you don't feel and see the improvement the very first day you use our Developer, return it and we return your money. With the Vacuum Developer any man can cure himself at home. Send for free book, sent sealed in plain envelope. Acme Mfg. Co., 541 Barclay Blk., Denver, Col.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

STRICTURE CURE

16,249 Cured Last Year.

Week's Trial FREE

Skeen's Painless Stricture Cure is the only known positive cure for Stricture, Enlarged prostate and Lost Vitality. To prove this will send enough medicine FREE to last a full week. The test is at our expense. Write today. Will also send our book upon stricture and testimonials.

B.A. SKEEN CO, 120 BELL BLOCK, CINCINNATI, O.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

BLOOD POISON

Primary, Secondary or Tertiary Blood Poison Permanently Cured. You can be treated at home under same guaranty. Capital $500,000. We solicit the most obstinate cases. We have cured the worst cases in 15 to 35 days. If you have taken mercury, iodide potash and still have aches and pains, Mucus Patches in Mouth, Sore Throat, Pimples, Copper-Colored Spots, Ulcers on any part of the body, Hair or Eyebrows falling out, write for proofs of cures.

Cook Remedy Co.

1730 MASONIC TEMPLE, Chicago, Ill. 100-page Book Free.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

Antonio also heard the same, for he instantly sprang to his feet, an expression on his face that looked for all the world like fear.

"You say you alone on dis key—then it be de captain and the rest of de crew. Look you out—bad men all dem I tell you, boys. S'pose you not say you see me—they p'r'aps kill me if they find. I crawl out dis way den, you see," and to the utter astonishment of the two lads he suited the action to his words, actually wriggling like a snake under the side of the shelter at a place where his quick eye had noticed a space inviting his attention.

This certainly smacked of mystery. What could Antonio have done to make him dread the others? At any rate, he had seen fit in his Conch language to warn them; and if the balance of the shipwrecked crew proved to be any more formidable looking than the same Antonio it certainly was up to the boys to be on their guard.

They had little opportunity to exchange words with regard to the strange antics of Antonio, for the voices came closer to the rude door, which immediately was pulled roughly open, and a string of men pushed into the interior.

At sight of the same our boys felt their hearts grow cold with a sudden dread, for if appearance went for anything these fellows must be about as tough representatives of the West Indies as one could find in a month's tour of the various islands.

CHAPTER VIII.

DA GAMA, THE SPONGER.

One of the spongers was a black Senegambian, another appeared to be a graceless Conch, dropping his "R's" just as freely as might a Cockney in old London, while the balance undoubtedly had Spanish blood in their veins, to judge from their swarthy skins.

Taken as a collective whole, they made a fine stage appearance, and under other conditions Maro might have hailed their coming on the scene with more or less enthusiasm, as something to break the horrid monotony of their existence on the lone isle; but when he considered how completely himself and companion must be in the power of these unscrupulous-looking rascals, he believed he would much sooner put up with their room than their company.

However, it was not their pleasure to say whether the five newcomers should stay or depart hence.

Teddy saw trouble in store, and it required considerable gritting of his teeth to keep in subjection the fears that endeavored to overwhelm him.

It was an easy task to pick out the valorous Vasco Da Gama, as spoken of by Antonio, for he towered head and shoulders above all his companions, who were unusually squatty in build. Moreover, he swaggered and walked, after the manner of a petty despot.

The men began to sniff the atmosphere eagerly.

Evidently the fumes of coffee had an irresistible attraction for each and every one of the quintette. Perhaps it was not every day they feasted on such a royal drink, and to come across it in this unexpected quarter aroused their liveliest hopes.

Teddy mentally groaned, seeing the finish of their slender stock.

He was something of a philosopher, however, and knew how to make the best of a bad bargain. If the thing had to be, why cry over it, when there was an abundance of coffee in the wide world, if they could only get to it.

Accordingly, he greeted the newcomers heartily, and said he was delighted to see they had cheated old Davy Jones out of his expected prey, all of which the others took with a grin, and while one began to poke at the fire, another took up the coffee-pot and began to shake it significantly, as if to gently hint that their longings ran that way.

They were disposed to go a trifle slow, since they did not as yet fully comprehend the situation, or know just how many of the original settlers there might be on the island. When the truth became manifest they might be expected to show their teeth.

Teddy was equal to the occasion, and taking the pot from the other he dumped half of their stock of precious coffee into it, filled it up from the water can, and set it on the fire.

Maro also showed his hospitality, for he too, grasped the situation, and knew how they must presently find themselves at the mercy of these rough fellows, so that an early good impression was worth something to them.

The absence of any spring of fresh water on the island had in the start appalled the boys, and they feared lest they might suffer all manner of tortures from lack of the same. A can had come ashore in the remains of the Loon which held several gallons, but this would have been soon finished and their outlook as serious as before, had not Maro, knowing a thing or two from his association with sailors who had suffered all the horrors of shipwreck, set to work digging in certain parts of hte island, with the wonderful result that they actually discovered a spring. True, the water had a decidedly brackish taste, but by boiling the same and allowing it to cool, they found it palatable enough for those who should not be choosers.

By degrees, as they devoured the meal set before them, quaffing huge draughts of the clear coffee which Teddy, as an experienced camp cook, knew how to concoct, the men became more familiar, and, asking questions which our boys could not avoid answering, they learned the facts with regard to the presence of the couple.

They, too, seemed to have more or less suspicions with regard to the truth of the story, just as Antonio had done. Indeed, it looked as though the spirit of treasure-seeking possessed every living being in this sea, the name of which has ever been linked with the bold deeds of these old-time buccaneers, and that it was hard to believe any person would come to one of these lone islands unless possessed of some expectation of locating hidden spoils.

It might come hard convincing these chaps that buried gold was the last thing either of them had in mind.

The men showed a little consideration in proposing to sleep outside on this night; but Maro felt sure this spirit would not last, and in a short time they might find themselves waiting on the set as servants to their lords and masters.

Oh, if the boat had only been in a condition for use, how eagerly would they have stolen away while the night lasted, and left the sponger crowd to their late possessions! But alas! even this prospect was barred by the incomplete condition of the Loon.

It may be readily understood that our boys found little sleep on this night, with such a dreary prospect staring them in the face.

Apparently there may be worse things than merely being shipwrecked.

Troubles find a fellow out on a lone island as well as at home in the midst of plenty.

They talked in whispers half of the night and tried to agree on some plan of action whereby their condition might be improved; but their hearts were heavy, for at times the rough voices outside were raised in oaths, and they could easily see what was apt to befall them on the slightest pretext, from such rough characters, with no law or authority to intimidate them.

Luckily the shotgun had been out of sight at the time the five men crowded into the shelter, and after much consultation it was agreed that if such a thing could be accomplished the weapon had better be hidden entirely, so that in case their condition at any time reached a desperate pass they might at least have one means of defending themselves.

How to accomplish this thing was the question.

Suspicious as the men were, if any one caught them stealing off it would naturally be supposed that they had some treasure secreted on the island, and once let that idea get fully into their heads, torture would be resorted to in order to force a confession.

Teddy solved the puzzle.

When all was quiet without, save an occasional stertorian snore that told of deep slumber, he took the gun, together with what ammunition they possessed, and crawled out from the back of the hut.

The men were lying in front, as that place offered better advantages for resting in fair comfort; and if he could only succeed in copying the tactics of the Indian guides with whom he had hunted moose up in his native Canada, all might be well.

The lad deserved credit for the manner of his departure; and Maro, who watched the recumbent forms as seen in the moonlight, holding his very breath in suspense, was gratified to see that not a man of the lot so much as sat up to listen.

In half an hour Teddy came back with just as much care as had marked his departure; but Maro, watching, saw the captain raise his frowsy head as though he might be listening, and he did not feel quite so confident as before that no suspicions had been aroused.

With the coming of morning trouble began right away.

A demand was made for breakfast, and the very last of the coffee went as a sacrifice to satisfy the longing of the sponger crew; and sad to relate, those worthies so far forgot their breeding that not one of them thought it worth while to offer the hosts a taste of the ambrosia, so that they were compelled to drink water with their breakfast.

Still, after this every one would be on the same footing so far as coffee was concerned, since the canister was quite empty.

Teddy was fain on various occasions when the longing came upon him to take a good whiff of the same canister, about which the fragrant odor still clung, though that usually only aggravated his longing.

The men manifested no great desire to do anything looking to their getting away from the island. So long as there did not appear to be grave danger of starvation—which could hardly come upon them with their two active cubs to procure provisions from the sea larder—they did not mean to exert themselves any more than might be absolutely necessary.

Sooner or later a vessel would heave in sight, upon which they could embark. Meanwhile, each day would be like its predecessor, and meant so much idling around.

If that were all, our boys would not have complained, since they had a decided penchant for fishing, and Teddy did not hesitate to show his ability as a chef; though it did gall him some to see those lazy rascals lying around giving orders as to just how they liked their fish done.

He put in as much time as he could pottering away on the boat, and tried to arrange matters so that while it would seem as though considerable work might remain to be done, in reality the boat would be in condition for service. It was his belief that sooner or later if the worst came he and his chum would be compelled to slip away in the dead of night, taking all the desperate chances of finding themselves adrift on the great and treacherous Caribbean with little or no preparation for the cruise.

What puzzled them during that first day was in connection with the fellow whom they knew as Antonio. Why, he had vanished as completely as though he had cast himself into the sea; and yet neither of them were of the opinion that he would do so foolhardy a thing.

There seemed so slender a chance for hiding on the island that it was almost incredible to imagine a fellow could remain out of sight during a whole day, with those five men roaming over every foot of land comprised in their dominion, and bounded on all sides by the sun.

It was Teddy who solved the question, but not until later.

That night he chanced to be awake when he was filled with curiosity and concern to realize that some one had crept into the shelter about in the same manner as he had gone out when bent on hiding the precious firearm.

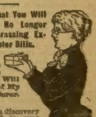
He was unable to see the party, but knew of his presence, and could hear him prowling around a certain quarter where the provisions were kept in stock.

His belief at the time was that one of the rascals had conceived the idea that there were valuables hidden among the culinary utensils, and had taken this opportunity for

I Cure Women

OF FEMALE DISEASES AND PILES

I Will Cure You So That You Will Stay Cured—Women No Longer Need Submit to Embarassing Examinations and Big Doctor Bills.



To Show Good Faith and to Prove to You That I Can Cure You I Will Send Free a Package of My Remedy to Every Sufferer.

I hold the secret of a discovery which has never failed to cure women of piles or female weakness. Falling of the womb, painful menstrual periods, leucorrhea, granulation, ulceration, etc., are very readily cured by my treatment.

I now offer this priceless secret to the women of America, knowing that it will always effect a cure, no matter how long you have suffered or how many doctors have failed.

I do not ask any sufferer to take my unsupported word for this, although it is true as gospel. If you will send me your name and address, I will send you a trial package absolutely free, which will show you that you can be cured. The free trial packages alone often are enough to cure. "Just sit down and write me for it today."

Mrs. Cora B. Miller, Box No. 25 Kokomo, Ind.

RODS for locating gold and silver, lost treasures, etc.; guaranteed; circulars 2-cents. Dallas Mineral Co., Bx 325-36, Dallas, Tex

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

RODS The latest improved; sold under guarantee. Used for locating mines, lost treasures, etc. Cir. two cents. Address: L. A. LOWRY, P.O. Box 1801-09, DENVER, Colo.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

BARBERS MAKE EASY MONEY! We teach you the business thoroughly in six weeks. You can make expenses while learning. Barbers make $15.00 to $25.00 weekly. Our FREE Catalog tells all about it. Write to-day. KANSAS CITY BARBER COLLEGE, F.C. Bridgford, Prop., 503 Delaware, Kansas City, Mo.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

DON'T MARRY, DOCTOR or despair. "Don't do a thing" till you see clearly what's best by aid of Flashlights on Human Nature, on health, disease, love, marriage and parentage. Tells what you'd ask a doctor, but don't like to. 240 pages, illustrated, 25 cents; but to introduce it we send one only to any adult for postage, 10 cents. M. HILL PUB. CO., 129 East 28th Street, New York.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

I Cure Contagious Blood Poison.

A trial treatment sent free to all who suffer with contagious blood poison, mucous patches in the mouth, sore throat, copper colored spots, chancres, ulcerations, falling hair, etc. Address Dr. C. Sargent Ferris, 8142 Strawn Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio, today for a free trial package.

Makes "Old Men" Boys Again

Free receipt that restores youthful vitality to men of all ages can now be had of the discoverer without Cost—Cures nervous debility, prostatic trouble, emissions, etc., and restores normal nerve-power almost instantly.

FULL DIRECTIONS FOR HOME CURE

Now that they have found a new ingredient that makes cures 50 per cent quicker than formerly and practically gives the de-

sired effect over night the Dr. Knapp Medical Co., of Detroit, the world's greatest authorities on the cure of vital weakness, want every weak man to write them for the free receipt that does this wonderful good, and full directions how to cure yourself privately at home. There is no man so old that this receipt will not make him feel like a youngster again; and middle-aged men who think their best days are gone will have a happy surprise in store for them. It is a blessing indeed to any man who is not as good as he used to be, and whether you are in the 20's or in the 60's the effect will be equally satisfactory and quick.

From what those who have used it say, a man can expect the change in less than 24 hours and a permanent cure in a short time. It cures nervous debility, premature discharge, undeveloped organs, varicocele, stricture, lack of power, exhaustion, etc., and cures it permanently to stay cured. It acts directly on the muscular tissues, mucous membranes, nerves and glands, and the effect is a comforting one indeed.

If you can make use of a receipt that brings about such happy results send your name and address today to the Dr. Knapp Medical Co., [illegible] Hull Building, Detroit, Mich., and it will be sent you by return mail together with directions for a private home cure and a descriptive booklet on your disease, all in an unmarked package. Let there be no delay.

making an investigation, unbeknown to his companions.

Teddy made no move, and finally the fellow departed in the same stealthy manner as he had come; but in the morning the lad noticed some of the hardtack on the ground, and it flashed over his mind that after all it had been Antonio who was the ghostly night visitor, and that the fellow had been rummaging after food, being desperately hungry after his fast of a day.

This made Teddy more curious than ever with regard to where his hiding-place might be.

While he worked at the boat that morning he was puzzling his mind over the question, and wondering if there could be some manner of a cave on the island, the presence of which Antonio had located, when he received a pointer from an unexpected quarter.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this thrilling story of adventure. Cameras and patterns are still being forwarded free to each subscriber. See advertisements on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Appetites Unlimited.

"Yes," said Mrs. Crawfoot, "I reckon the bears you saw up in the town zoo were great eaters. Ate almost as much as an elephant, didn't they?"

"Elephant?" echoed Mr. Crawfoot, disdainfully. "Why, them critters ate as much as a hired man."

Merely a Suggestion.

"My salary," said the youth with the noisy neckwear, who invariably goes broke shortly after pay day, "seems to burn a hole in my pocket."

"You should request the boss to hand it to you in cold cash," suggested the fair boarder who manipulates the typewriter keys between meals.

Hopeful Case.

Jack—What did old Gotrox say when you told him you loved his daughter?

Tom—He said he loved her also.

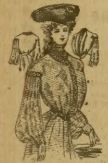
Jack—Well, I'm sure you couldn't object to that.

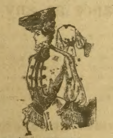
Tom—Oh, I didn't object to what he said; it was the way he said it that shattered my financial prospects.

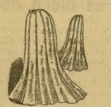
Beautiful Patterns Free---An Unparalleled Offer.

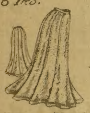
The patterns shown below are furnished us by one of the best, if not the best, pattern manufacturers in New York. They comprise the very latest styles, and are unequalled for accuracy in fit, simplicity in use, and are most economical of material. They sell from the stores from twenty-five to fifty cents each. Full instructions are printed on every pattern. Three months' subscription to the CHICAGO LEDGER for 25 cents and any TWO of these patterns FREE. Six months' subscription to the CHICAGO LEDGER for 50 cents and FIVE of these patterns FREE. This offer is without equal. If you are wise you will take advantage of it at once.

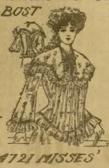
REMEMBER, to avoid mistakes, you must first give the number of the Pattern wanted—second, do not fail to give bust-measure for waist, or waist measure if skirt is desired. Unless you do as here stated we will not know what to send you. Also, do not fail to enclose money **PATTERN DEPT., CHICAGO LEDGER, CHICAGO, ILL.**

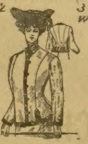

4725 MISSES' BLOUSE ETON, 12 16 YRS.

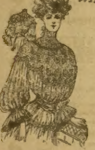

4695 ETON JACKET 32-40 BUST

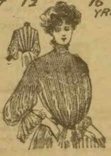

4697 FAN PLAITED SKIRT 22 30 WAIST

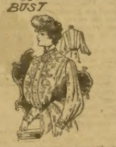

4703 NINE GORED TUCKED SKIRT 22-32 WAIST

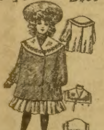

4721 MISSES' HOUSE JACKET 12 16 YRS.

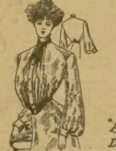

4702 COLLARLESS JACKET 32-40 BUST

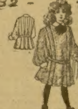

4731 FANCY BLOUSE WAIST 32-40 BUST

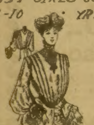

4723 TUCKED BLOUSE 32-40 BUST

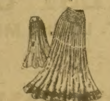

4700 BLOUSE OR SHIRT WAIST 32-40 BUST

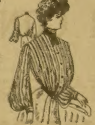

4734 GIRL'S COAT 4-10 YRS.

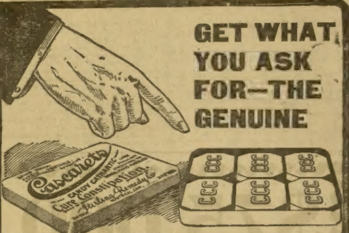

4730 SHIRT WAIST 36-46 BUST


4707 GIRL'S "BUSTER BROWN" DRESS 14-12 YRS.


4705 FANCY WAIST 32-40 BUST.


4701 BOX PLAITED YOKE SKIRT 22 30 WAIST


4715 BLOUSE OR SHIRT WAIST 36-46 BUST



GET WHAT YOU ASK FOR—THE GENUINE

CASCARETS Candy Cathartic are always put up in blue metal box, our trade-marked, long-tailed C on the cover—tablet octagonal, stamped C C C. Never sold in bulk. All druggists, 10c, 25c, 50c. Sample and booklet free. Address
STERLING REMEDY CO., Chicago or New York. 630

Cascarets
CANDY CATHARTIC
THEY WORK WHILE YOU SLEEP

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

430 Good Stories FREE!

To introduce WOMAN'S WORLD in your home we make a present of a valuable collection of choice reading matter. WOMAN'S WORLD has a circulation of 800,000 copies each issue, and is the best high class illustrated magazine ever published at a low price. Send only ten cents, our special rate for a five months' trial subscription, and we will send WOMAN'S WORLD for five months; we will also send you by return mail 70 COMPLETE STORIES FREE—most of these stories are copyrighted—this is a wonderful big offer. Send for this lot at once—you will be delighted. Send 25 cents and we will send WOMAN'S WORLD one year—and we will also send you by return mail our mammoth collection of 430 COMPLETE STORIES FREE—this is a tremendous big offer—fact—'twill surely please you. This grand collection of good stories is made up of Love Stories, Domestic Stories, Society stories, Detective Stories, Funny Stories, Sea, Indian and Hunting Stories; also Railroad Stories and a lot of miscellaneous stories. These stories are all written by well-known authors—we can't mention the titles in this ad.—there are so many of them—430 stories you know—WRITE TODAY and get WOMAN'S WORLD and a large supply of first-class reading matter—enough to last you all winter—satisfaction absolutely guaranteed or your money back right away. Address

WOMAN'S WORLD
FIVE MONTHS
ONLY TEN CENTS
and SEVENTY COMPLETE STORIES FREE.

WOMAN'S WORLD,
DEPT. 86, CHICAGO, ILL.

WOMAN'S WORLD
ONE YEAR
ONLY 25 CENTS
AND 430 COMPLETE STORIES FREE.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

A BEAUTIFUL RING FREE
IF YOU CAN MAKE OUT THIS PUZZLE

15 21 18
7 18 5 1 20
16 21 26 26 12 5
15 6 6 5 18

If you can answer this interesting four-word puzzle we will send you **Free a Beautiful Simulation Pearl Ring.** Each one of the four lines of figures spells one word, and the four words make a sentence. There are twenty-six letters in the alphabet, and we have used figures in spelling the four words instead of letters. Letter A is No. 1, B No. 2, C No. 3, etc., throughout the entire alphabet. If you are smart you can answer this interesting puzzle. Be sure and send a slip of paper showing size of ring you wish. When you send us your answer inclose a 2c. stamp to pay postage for the delivery of the Ring. We know that this **Beautiful Simulation Pearl Ring will delight you,** so send your solution to the puzzle promptly, and we will immediately, by return mail, send you this pretty Ring. Address **THE ROBINSON PUBLISHING CO., Ring Dept., 22 North William Street, New York City.**

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

BOYS WANTED TO SELL THE BLADE AND LEDGER.

We want a boy in every town to act as agent. We start you without asking a cent in advance. Fill out the blank below and we will send you a bundle of BLADES AND LEDGERS by mail, also report blanks, instructions, and certificate of agency. You report each week, paying only for papers you sell. You keep 2 cents out of every 5 cent sale and send us 3 cents. In this way you can earn a nice sum each week. No experience necessary. We send full instructions so you can begin at once. Tear out the coupon below and send it in.

W. D. BOYCE CO., Boyce Building, Chicago.

GENTLEMEN: I would like to be your agent. I agree to pay you for all papers I sell, less my commission. I also agree to report every week. Please send me a bundle of papers, report blanks, etc *Yours truly,*

Name..

Street.............................. Town.......................................

Date.............................. State..

Enchanted String.

They say you can do wonders with a string.

For instance, play you are a wizard and tell some one you have an enchanted string that will act as a gun.

Take a strong string, about two yards long, at one end make a loop big enough to pass over a person's head without any trouble, and another loop—a tiny one—at the other end, the right size to hold a pencil.

Tell your friend to cover his ears with his hands—held flat against them.

Then pass the large loop over his head and draw it tight across the backs of his hands.

Place a pencil in the smaller loop, and turn it rather quickly around and around while you hold the string tight.

The effect on your friend's ears will be like the firing of numerous guns.

Then pluck the string with the fingers of your free hand. Just a little flick will sound like the booming of a heavy gun.

Keeping the pencil held in one hand, and pulling the string tight, now fold a small piece of paper over the string and move it—not roughly—up and down the length of the string. This will sound to your friend like the waves on the beach.

If next you scrape the string with anything hard—like a knife or paper cutter—it will give your friend the impression of heavy thunder.

Paper Doll Party.

For little girls there is no greater fun than a paper doll party. Ask each little girl to bring with her her whole family of paper dolls. If she has none she can easily buy them, because, fortunately, they are not expensive.

What you have to do for their entertainment is to lay in stock a lot of fancy paper, all colors and designs.

Almost any store has dozens of designs for you to choose from.

What each guest will be expected to do is to make a gown for one of her dolls and try to make it prettiest of all. You should have a very pretty prize to award to the one who gets up the handsomest dress.

Poor Little Girl.

"Aren't you hungry, dear?" asked her aunt, with whom she was traveling.

The child's lip quivered and she said, in a tone to grrieve the heart:

"I'm seasick for home."

$75,000.00 IN GOLD

TO BE GIVEN AWAY.

Why not get a part of it? You have just as much chance as any one else.

You are interested in the Great World's Fair. You have seen something about it in every paper you have read for months past. Have you thought how many people will attend this Great Fair? The gates have been thrown open and multitudes of visitors from every part of the earth are paying admission into the grounds of the Greatest Fair the world has ever seen. At the Chicago World's Fair, 21,480,141 people paid admission into the grounds. At the Buffalo Pan-American Exposition, 5,306,859 people paid admission into the grounds. At the Omaha Exposition, 1,778,250 people paid admission.

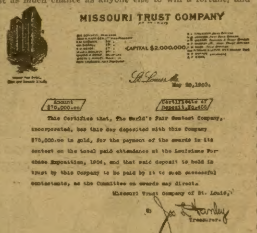
Can you estimate how many people will pay admission into the grounds of the Great St. Louis World's Fair this year? If you can, a fortune is yours. Think it over. We offer 1889 cash prizes to the 1889 men, women or children who can estimate **nearest** to the total number of people who will pay admission into the Fair Grounds from April 30, 1904, the opening date, to December 1, 1904, the closing date of the great World's Fair. These prizes amount to **$75,000.30,**

The largest prizes ever offered in any contest, and are divided as follows:

To the nearest correct estimate	$25,000.00
To the second nearest correct estimate	10,000.00
To the third nearest correct estimate	5,000.00
To the fourth nearest correct estimate	2,500.00
To the fifth nearest correct estimate	1,500.00
To the sixth nearest correct estimate	1,000.00
To the next 10 nearest correct estimates, $200 each	2,000.00
To the next 20 nearest correct estimates, $100 each	2,000.00
To the next 50 nearest correct estimates, $50 each	2,500.00
To the next 100 nearest correct estimates, $25 each	2,500.00
To the next 200 nearest correct estimates, $10 each	2,000.00
To the next 500 nearest correct estimates, $5 each	2,500.00
To the next 1,000 nearest correct estimates, $1 each	1,000.00
Supplementary prizes for the estimates sent in earliest	15,500.00
Total	$75,000.00

ESTIMATES 25 CENTS EACH. 5 FOR $1.00.

For every estimate you are given a separate engraved and numbered certificate with coupon attached. These certificates will cost you 25 cents each, or 5 for $1.00. An investment of 25 cents or $1.00 may mean your independence for life. You have just as much chance as anyone else to win a fortune, and it is to your interest and to your family's to take advantage of the opportunity as soon as possible.



MISSOURI TRUST COMPANY

CAPITAL $2,000,000.

St. Louis Mo.
May 20, 1903.

Amount
$75,000.00

Certificate of
Deposit No. 456

This Certifies that, The World's Fair Contest Company, incorporated, has this day deposited with this Company $75,000.00 in gold, for the payment of the awards in its contest on the total paid attendance at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, 1904, and that said deposit is held in trust by this Company to be paid by it to such successful contestants, as the Committee on awards may direct.

Missouri Trust Company of St. Louis,
By
Treasurer.

☞ You are not placing your orders with an unreliable concern. The money to cover our prizes is on deposit. See statement of one of the largest banks in the United States herewith. In entering a contest, this should be your first consideration. Know that the money to pay you is where you can get it without delay or question as soon as the prizes are awarded.

We cannot touch this money. It is held by the Missouri Trust Co. for no other purpose than to pay these prizes as soon as the committee on awards declares the successful contestants. This committee has no interest whatever in the contest, and is made up of prominent business men who have agreed to award the prizes, and your estimates are turned over to this committee long before the Fair closes, so that there is no possibility of collusion or unfairness from any source.

We announced a short time ago that the sale of certificates and coupons would be limited, and our sales during April were enormous. New and old contestants from all over the country sent in large orders daily, thereby reducing the supply of certificates and coupons considerably. We anticipate that the limit will be reached long before the date set for the close of the contest. We want you to join in this Great Contest. We know that if you wait you will not have the opportunity to join. We ask you to write us to-day.

WE DO NOT ASK YOU TO ESTIMATE NOW. We will simply sell you the certificates with duplicate coupons attached, and allow you the privilege of filling in your own estimates on the certificates and coupons whenever you are ready, and of sending in the coupons to us on the very last day of the contest if you wish. That is, you do not have to make your estimate NOW, but you can buy your certificates NOW, and hold them yourself up to the last day of the contest, when you will know what the total attendance is up to that date, then fill in your estimates and send the coupons to us just so they are received in our office not later than October 15, 1904, the date on which the contest closes. The World's Fair opens April 30, 1904, and closes December 1, 1904, showing that the closing date of the contest is at least six weeks prior to the closing date of the Fair, insuring absolute fairness to every participant in the contest.

HOW YOU WILL KNOW THE ATTENDANCE. Nearly every paper in the United States and Canada will print the daily, weekly and monthly attendance as the Fair progresses, so that non-residents will have just as much information at hand upon which to base their estimates as those who live in St. Louis. We will mail to all purchasers of certificates and coupons, circulars giving the attendance from time to time and giving all other data which we think will be of assistance to contestants in making an accurate estimate.

HOW THE CONTEST WILL BE DECIDED. The Official Record of the Secretary of the World's Fair showing the total paid attendance will determine who are entitled to the prizes, and the awards will be made by a committee of prominent Judges. Prizes will be paid in cash immediately after. If more than one estimate is correct, the prize will be equally divided.

CERTIFICATES AND HOW TO GET THEM. One certificate will be sent for 25 cents. Five certificates for $1.00. **LOWER RATES ON LARGER QUANTITIES,** The more certificates and coupons you hold the greater your chances of winning one or more of these magnificent sums. You can buy as many Certificates as you wish. You must send in your money for same before we can send you certificates. It is to your interest to write us at once for further particulars. Those who send in their remittances first are those who have the greatest advantages. If you put it off the supply may be exhausted and you will be too late to get even one certificate without paying an unreasonable price for it. Even if you do not wish to purchase now, write us for further particulars anyhow. We know you will be interested. Address

THE WORLD'S FAIR CONTEST CO.,

7150 DELMAR BOULEVARD, - - - ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.—Bear in mind **That You Hold Your Own Certificates** and Coupons and that you do not have to make your estimates or fill in the Certificates and Coupons and send the coupons to us until the very last day of the Contest. In this manner you learn the entire attendance up to the very last day of the Contest, which will enable you to arrive at an average daily attendance upon which to base your estimates for the entire Fair. Contestants are distinctly to understand that participation in this prize contest is not confined to subscribers for any one paper, but that the contest is being advertised in a large number of other publications, the subscribers for all of which are priviledged to compete and share in the distribution of the prizes offered.

When Writing Mention the Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention Chicago Ledger. When Writing Mention Chicago Ledger.